# PLAYS AND PAGEANTS FROM *the* LIFE *of the* NEGRO

WILLIS RICHARDSON

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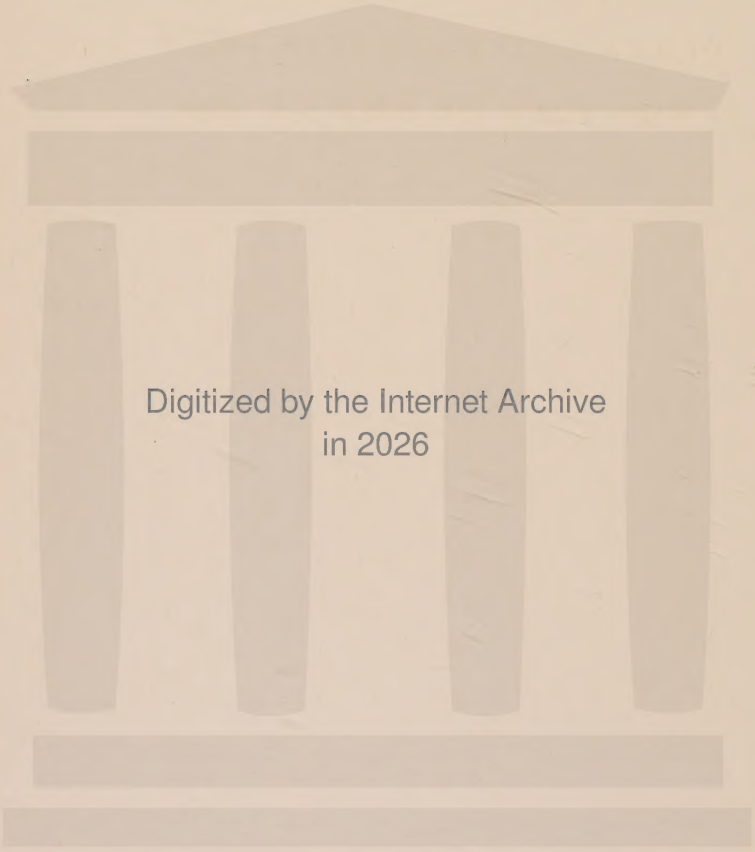
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# PLAYS AND PAGEANTS FROM THE LIFE OF THE NEGRO

ETHIOPIA AT THE BAR OF JUSTICE

# PLAYS AND PAGEANTS FROM *The* LIFE *of the* NEGRO

*Willis Richardson*

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# CONTENTS

PAGE

INTRODUCTION . . . . . vii

PLAYS

SACRIFICE . . . . . 3
*Thelma Myrtle Duncan*

ANTAR OF ARABY . . . . . 27
*Maud Cuney-Hare*

TI YETTE . . . . . 77
*John Matheus*

GRAVEN IMAGES . . . . . 109
*May Miller*

RIDING THE GOAT . . . . . 141
*May Miller*

THE BLACK HORSEMAN . . . . . 179
*Willis Richardson*

THE KING'S DILEMMA . . . . . 219
*Willis Richardson*

THE HOUSE OF SHAM . . . . . 241
*Willis Richardson*

## PAGEANTS

PAGE

TWO RACES . . . . . 295
*Inez M. Burke*

OUT OF THE DARK . . . . . 305
*Dorothy C. Guinn*

THE LIGHT OF THE WOMEN . . . . . 333
*Frances Gunner*

ETHIOPIA AT THE BAR OF JUSTICE . . . . . 345
*Edward J. McCoo*

# INTRODUCTION

When the author was requested to read and collect plays for a volume of this kind, that is, a collection of plays written primarily for use in schools, he anticipated a very pleasant task since there is no form of writing he enjoys more than the drama; but when he began to read and consider the plays he soon learned that he was confronted with a triple difficulty. The plays must be written by Negro authors, must be for the most part not in dialect, and must have subject-matter suitable for young people of school age. These difficulties were increased by the facts that most Negro plays are not written by Negro authors and that most plays written by Negro authors are written in dialect.

In making the selections, then, one play had to be put aside because it contained too much dialect, another because the question of sex came too much to the fore, another because the characters were such that to come within hearing distance of them was to be shocked by an unpleasant odor, and still another because its subject-matter would cause more confusion in the minds of the youthful than a quarrelsome, wide woman in a narrow house.

The pageants did not present so difficult a task. The author read them, but the real editor of the pageants is Dr. Carter G. Woodson, who made all the corrections as to names, dates and historical inaccuracies, but was too modest to allow his name to be printed along with the author on the title page of the book.

We have collected what we consider the best material of its kind that could be obtained, and are offering this book to the public with the hope that there may be found in it plays and pageants suitable for every reasonable need of School, Church, or Little Theater Group. If you should wish a pageant for children just old enough to remember lines, "Two Races," which is both short and simple, should serve you; or if you are seeking something more elaborate and more suitable for adults, "Out of the Dark," "The Light of the Women," or "Ethiopia at the Bar of Justice" may please you.

Among the plays "Graven Images" and "The King's Dilemma" have child and adult characters which may be portrayed by teachers and their pupils; while "The House of Sham," "Ti Yette," "Riding the Goat," "Sacrifice," "The Black Horseman" and "Antar of Araby" may be used by older students or by adults of any group. If you wish a simple story of unostentatious heroism there is "Sacrifice," if you are looking for tragedy, there is "Ti Yette," for comedy "Riding the Goat," for romance "Antar of Araby," for something akin to neo-romance, "Graven Images," "The King's Dilemma," and "The Black Horseman."

It is probable that some may consider these plays and pageants too simple; but simplicity has been our aim and if we have achieved that our work has been rewarded.

Of the writers of the plays in this volume more ought to be said than can be given here without making this introduction unreasonably long. A word or two about each, then, must suffice.

Thelma Duncan, whose "Sacrifice" is the first play in the book, is the author of several other one-act plays, among which are "The Scarlet Shawl" and "The Death

Dance." The latter play was written while she was a student in Montgomery Gregory's class in dramatics at Howard University, and was among the first of the Negro dramas produced by the Howard University Players.

Maud Cuney-Hare, author of "Antar of Araby," is better known as a pianist and interpreter of Negro music than as a playwright, but in the Negro Little Theater Movement of Boston she is well known, being one of the leading spirits in the Allied Arts Theater Group which mothers the Negro drama in the New England capital.

The author of "Ti Yette" became known to us originally as an excellent short story writer, being the author of such jewels as "Fog" and "Swamp Moccasin"; and to hear him read one of these is to me like hearing Roland Hayes sing. When John Matheus turns his hand to the writing of plays he very nearly matches the excellence of his short stories; and if you will read "Ti Yette" nothing can make me believe you will not be anxious to read " 'Cruiter" and "Black Damp" as well.

One of the most promising of the Negro playwrights is May Miller whose two plays, "Graven Images" and "Riding the Goat" have helped to make the Negro drama worthy of attention. Miss Miller's name first came to public notice when her play, "The Bog Guide" was one of the prize winners in *Opportunity's* first literary contest, and she continues to retain public notice by completing at reasonable intervals such plays as "Scratches," "Stragglers of the Dusk" and "The Cussed Thing."

The Rev. Edward J. McCoo, a minister of the A. M. E. Church, has given much attention to the strivings and achievements of the Negro; and to visualize these things he wrote "Ethiopia at the Bar of Justice." With the assistance of Prof. John R. Hawkins he presented this

pageant as one of the features of the Quadrennial Conference of the A. M. E. Church in Louisville, Kentucky, in 1924. Since then the pageant has been used extensively in connection with Negro History Week.

Inez M. Burke, who was educated in the public schools of the District, is the author of "Two Races." She is also the author of several little plays and pageants which have been presented by her own pupils in the Washington Public Schools. The play included here is suggestive of what may be done in the lower grades to make history teaching realistic by frequent dramatizations.

Dorothy C. Guinn in collaboration with her assistants wrote "Out of the Dark" to direct nationwide attention to the romantic story of the Negro. The pageant was presented wih great success in Bridgeport, Connecticut, and made an equally favorable impression in Atlanta, Georgia, where it was staged soon after. This pageant together with McCoo's "Ethiopia at the Bar of Justice" has enjoyed wider production in popular circles than most of those which have been used.

As secretary of the Y. W. C. A. in Brooklyn, Frances Gunner experienced the difficulty encountered by others in acquainting the Negro with himself. She considered it especially unfortunate that Negro women knew nothing of those of their sex who have achieved so much as heroines of the critical period through which the race had to pass. This was what prompted her to write the pageant entitled "The Light of the Women."

Willis Richardson.

Washington
*January*, 1930.

"Upon such sacrifices the gods themselves throw incense."

# SACRIFICE

A One-Act Play

by

Thelma Myrtle Duncan

Adapted to the capacity of children of the eighth grade.

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## CHARACTERS

MRS. PAYTON
BILLY, *her son*
INA, *her daughter*
ROY, *a friend of the family*

Time—Present.
Place—A large eastern city.

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# SACRIFICE

A Play — By Thelma Myrtle Duncan

## Scene

*The scene opens in the living room of a two room and kitchenette apartment. The room is plainly furnished: a davenport, rocker, few chairs, coat rack and a gate-legged table with a few books and a newspaper on it. At the right of the rear wall is an open door leading to the kitchenette.* Mrs. Payton *can easily be seen bending over a wash tub. She is tired and stops to wipe the perspiration from her face, then puts her hand to her heart. She begins rubbing again. At the left of the rear wall is a hall leading to a bedroom and also the outside.* Ina *enters from hall rather buoyant and gay. She is returning home from her work.*

MRS. PAYTON

[*From kitchenette.*]

Ina?

INA

Yes, mother.

[Mrs. Payton *comes to door of kitchen.* Ina *removes her hat and spring coat. Hangs them on rack in living room.*]

Gosh, it's springy. I could hardly stay in the office. Do you realize what day this is, mother?

MRS. PAYTON

Why . . . no . . .

INA

It's the twenty-first . . . the first day of spring. Real spring is actually here. [*Comes over to mother and kisses her on the cheek.*] You are tired. I can see it in your face. Every day the same old thing . . . in the wash tub. . . . Why, you're . . . sick. It's your heart again.

MRS. PAYTON

I'm all right. It's nothing.

INA

[*Assisting her mother to a chair.*]
Maybe you had better lie down.

MRS. PAYTON

Oh, no, no . . . child . . . I'm all right. It was just a small attack. I thought it would be gone by now. . . . I've a few more pieces to wash.

INA

You sit still. I'll finish in here.
[*Pointing to kitchen.*]

MRS. PAYTON

You are tired, honey. You've been working all day. I'll finish those things. I'm all right now.
[*Tries to force a smile.*]
[INA *slips a smock over her dress, and goes to tub.* MRS. PAYTON *gets up and stands in door.*]

MRS. PAYTON

Don't put your hands in that water, honey. They won't be fit for the typewriter to-morrow. . . . Come away and rest. I'm going to finish those things. That little spell is over.

INA

I am glad you are better . . . but I'm not tired. I haven't worked hard to-day . . . couldn't, it was too springy. . . . Why, I opened my window high and let the sweet balmy air pour into the room, and what do you suppose came into the office?

MRS. PAYTON

What was it, honey?

INA

[*Stops rubbing.*]

A bluebird—and it was beautiful. It hopped right in the window and flew around the room. Clarice wanted to catch it, but I wouldn't let her. The poor little thing was frightened out of its wits. [*Imitating bird.*] It flopped its wings back and forth around the room until finally it flew out the open window. Gee, but it was pretty.

[*Resumes washing.*]

MRS. PAYTON

You are always admiring something, honey. Bluebirds do mean spring . . . [*thoughtfully*] . . . I didn't plan dinner, because I didn't know what you and Billy wanted. What would you like?

INA

Never mind about dinner. I'll cook something. You must lie down and rest. What's the need of having a big daughter if she is not going to help?

[INA *stops washing and puts arm around mother, attempting to guide her to the bedroom.*]

INA

I'm not going to have you working your fingertips off for us, and getting sick.

MRS. PAYTON

No, honey, I haven't time for lying down . . . I've just thought of something. This is Thursday, and I've got to take Mr. Brown's wash. You know he goes out tonight. . . . I expect I will let you finish those few pieces, and I'll run around the corner to Mr. Brown's.

INA

Why can't I do both?

MRS. PAYTON

No, dear, I'll take them. There are always a lot of porters hanging around there, and they might get fresh. . . . I'll take them. . . . Honestly, Ina, I can have the funniest pains. A few minutes ago I felt terrible, and now I feel as if I never had a pain in my life. [*Gets shawl from rack.*] I might as well stop by the market and get a few things. It's not out of the way. [*Gets basket from kitchen, puts wash in basket.*] Is there anything you want, honey?

INA

I don't think so. [*Thinking.*] Wait a minute . . . you can bring a can of salmon, and I'll make some croquettes. Billy is so fond of them, and they don't cost much.

MRS. PAYTON

All right. [*Going to hall.*] I'll be right back.

[*Exit.*]

[INA *continues to wash and sings a popular song, something gay and lively. Enter* BILLY *and* ROY. *Both appear excited and nervous.*]

ROY

[*In mock surprise.*]

Well, look at my angel! Ain't she sweet?

BILLY

Where is mother, Sis?

INA

Gone to the store. She'll be right back. Hi there, Roy. [*She comes to door with dishpan full of clothes.*] You are just in time to help me with this load.

ROY

Sure . . . where to?

INA

On the roof. [*Noticing* BILLY's *nervousness.*] What's the matter, Billy? You don't look just right, what's wrong?

BILLY

[*With nervous laugh.*]

Nothing . . . of course nothing is the matter.

INA

Well, you don't look like it. . . . I don't want to have to worry about you too. Mother's isn't at all well. It's her heart again. She works so hard . . . washes all day . . . [*sighs*] . . . I will be glad when you graduate, Billy.

BILLY

[*Absently.*]
I . . . graduate?

INA

Yes, you . . . not I. You look as if you never heard of a graduation. [*To* Roy.] Come on, Roy, let's go.

BILLY

Let Roy stay here. We've got . . . some work to get out. Let her have the clothes, Roy.

INA

[*Indignant.*]
Of all the nerve!

BILLY

You can hang those clothes alone, Sis. I've got to see Roy.

ROY

[*Playfully.*]
Sorry, Miss . . . but my boss has spoken. Guess I had better obey or lose my job.

INA

You never meant to help in the first place.
[*Takes pan and exits.*]

BILLY

[*Appealingly.*]
I feel rotten. . . . What must I do?

ROY

Let me see the questions.

BILLY

All right, I'll get them. [*Exit to bedroom.* ROY *picks up newspaper, looks hastily over it, and puts it down at entrance of* BILLY.] Here they are. . . . Oh, God! What made me take them?

ROY

[*Looking over questions.*]
Sure sounds like old Burton. I can see him asking me to write this formula, and me flunking on it.

BILLY

What must I do? I can't let mother know. I don't want any one to know.

ROY

Your mother won't need to know.

BILLY

But, Roy, I'll never graduate after all she's done for me. . . . I'll be put out sure. They'll surely find me out. If I had only let them alone.

[*Silence between the two.* ROY *in deep thought,* BILLY *in nervous agitation.* ROY *sits.*]

ROY

Does any one know about them but me?

BILLY

No . . . none but you.

ROY

Are you sure that Burton has missed them?

BILLY

Yes, Percy told me that he was furious because he knew some one took them, and he has already gone to prexy, said he wouldn't stop at anything until he found the thief . . . and he'll do it sure.

ROY

You had better take them back. . . . Say they blew out the window or something, and you found them. You ought to get by on that.

BILLY

Too late now. . . . He already suspects that they've been stolen . . . and you know very well he hates me . . . ever since that time I took Muriel to that frat dance . . . thought I was trying to take her from him. He'd be glad to put me out if I went back to him now.

ROY

Let's see. Surely we can think of something. The exam is to-morrow. Burton ought to have those papers back to-night.

BILLY

[*Helplessly.*]

What must I do . . . what must I do? I've got to graduate. . . . It will kill mother if I don't.

[*There is a deep silence again. Enter* Ina *with empty pan.*]

INA

You two look as if you had committed murder. What's wrong? [*Puts pan down and comes straight to* BILLY.] What's the matter, Billy? Tell me what is wrong.

[BILLY *is silent. She turns to* ROY.]

[*Emphatically.*]

Roy, what is the matter? Please tell me.

ROY

[*Reluctantly.*]

Tell her, Billy.

BILLY

I've done something awful, Sis. . . . I'm afraid I won't graduate . . . I . . . stole Prof. Burton's chemistry exam.

INA

Oh, Billy! How could you!

BILLY

I don't know why I did it. I don't know why . . . but I did. . . .

INA

[*Approaching* BILLY. *Tenderly.*]

Tell me, Billy, what made you do it?

BILLY

I've been doing so poorly in chemistry, I was afraid I wouldn't graduate . . . yet I knew that I must, because mother has staked so much on me. I dropped by Burton's

classroom after class yesterday to hand in my notebook, but he wasn't in. I knew he must have just stepped out, because the exam was on his desk with the ink not dry on the paper. An impulse came to me to take it . . . but I hesitated at first. I guess my impulse was greater than my will, for I took it. . . . I only meant to look it over . . . but somehow I couldn't put it back. . . . I brought it home . . . but I haven't looked at it. . . . I couldn't. . . . Oh, God! This is terrible. What will mother say?

INA

[*Comforting.*]

Poor boy. We won't let mother know. Surely there must be a way out somehow. Why not take the exam back to Burton and explain what you have done. Surely he will understand . . . and forgive.

BILLY

[*Shaking head.*]

You don't know Burton, Sis. . . . I couldn't take them to him . . . now.

INA

Well, mail them to him. He would never know who sent them.

BILLY

I'm afraid . . . I think he suspects me.

INA

What makes you think so?

BILLY

I don't know. Percy looked at me rather strangely to-day when he told me about Burton losing his papers.

ROY

No one could swear it was you, could he?

BILLY

No . . . but I left my notebook . . . and it was the only one on the desk. It's a dead give away.

ROY

I forgot about the notebook. [*Silence.*] It wouldn't have to be you who took your notebook in just because it has your name in it.

BILLY

Do you mean that I might have asked some one else to take it by for me?

ROY

[*Nods.*]
Sure . . . any one could have left it for you.

BILLY

But . . . that would be wrong . . . again . . . making some one else suffer for what I've done. Besides, I never fool around with any of those other guys but you . . . and old Burton wouldn't believe me. No, I've got to face it out myself.

INA

It would break mother's heart if she knew.

ROY

We must keep it from her.

[*Outside door shuts and* MRS. PAYTON *walks in.* BILLY *hurriedly thrusts the exam paper between a book on the table.*]

MRS. PAYTON

[*Smiling.*]

Hello boys. Glad to see you, Roy. Ina, you are right about the weather. It's glorious outside . . . first time I've been out to-day, and the sun has done me good. [*Puts basket on table, then hangs up wraps.*]

ROY

How are you, Mrs. Payton?

MRS. PAYTON

Right now, I feel good, son . . . but I haven't been so well all day. [*To* INA.] Ina, here is the salmon. You can talk to Roy, and I will cook the dinner.

ROY

Let Ina cook. She has been bragging about what swell dishes she can put out. Now's her chance, and I'm here to witness it. You stay and talk with me, Mrs. Payton.

[BILLY *nervously goes to rack and gets hat. His mother watches him anxiously.* INA *takes basket into kitchen.*]

MRS. PAYTON

Why, Billy, dear. . . . Where are you going?

BILLY

I'm coming right back, mother. . . . I've . . . got . . . to go down the street . . . a minute.

MRS. PAYTON

For what, honey? . . . Ina is preparing dinner.

BILLY

I'll be back in time for dinner. . . . I've got to go . . . now. [*Exit hurriedly.*]

MRS. PAYTON

Billy acts strange. . . . Is anything wrong, Roy?

ROY

[*Forced laugh.*]
No . . . of course not. . . .

MRS. PAYTON

[*Sitting opposite* ROY.]
It's not like him to go off at dinner time, and not tell me where he is going. . . . You know I count on you, Roy.

ROY

Everything is all right. Billy just went out to get . . . some air. . . . We had a pretty tough lesson to-day.

MRS. PAYTON

[*Anxiously.*]
Did he do . . . all right?

ROY

Sure. . . . He's a crackerjack at getting his work out.

MRS. PAYTON

I'm so glad to hear that. . . . You know, Roy, I believe it would kill me if something happened . . . now, and Billy didn't graduate. I couldn't stand it. . . . You know I've worked pretty hard . . . pretty hard. . . . I'm about to the end . . . of my rope. . . . I can't hold out

much longer. I'm just waiting until June and then I'm afraid it will be the end. . . . You know I pray every night that I may hold out until June. . . . I want to see my boy come out all right . . . then I'll be ready to go.

ROY

You mustn't talk like that, Mrs. Payton. . . . You are going to be here a long time. Why, you are no old woman yet.

MRS. PAYTON

I'm fifty . . . but there are times when I feel eighty . . . I've worked so hard, Roy, ever since their father died. I've tried to educate them. . . . I wanted them to get the things in life that we missed, John and I. Ina has done well. She came out of business school last year and now she has a good job working for Simpson . . . makes fifteen dollars a week. I don't know what I would do if it wasn't for her. Billy helps too, a little after school . . . but I don't like to take his money, because I want him to look like the other boys, and have a little change in his pocket, too. He's a good boy . . . and I know he'll make good.

ROY

Sure, Billy will make good.

MRS. PAYTON

You have faith in him too, don't you?

ROY

Billy and I have been buddies for six years now. . . . We're pretty friendly. I think as much of him as I would a brother. Dad told me the other night that he was getting jealous of us.

MRS. PAYTON

What are you going to do, Roy, when you come out? Are you going into the real estate business with your father?

ROY

Dad wants me to study law and then go into business with him. Real estate isn't so bad. Dad's made a good go of it. . . . Guess I might as well try that as any.

MRS. PAYTON

I know you will make good like your father.

ROY

I hope so . . . but I've got a long wait.

MRS. PAYTON

It's not so long. . . . You are blessed to be able to continue in the law school. I wish. . . . Oh, I wish that my boy could take up a profession . . . but. . . . If only his father had lived. You know John wanted Billy to be something . . . something great. It was his greatest ambition, and he worked hard, too, while he lived. John was a good husband. He made money, too, lots of it, after coming here, and we lived well . . . like other folk, nice home, nice clothes, and plenty of friends. But it didn't last long. He died, and after that . . . I had to carry on alone . . . and it went hard. There was nothing much I could do . . . except wash. I was considered the best laundress down there where we came from . . . so I began here. . . . That's why I'm so broken . . . but the children had to have their chance.

ROY

Never mind, Mrs. Payton, everything will come out all right. . . . Everything will be all right.

MRS. PAYTON

I hope so.

[*Enter* INA. *She comes to gate-legged table and begins to unload it.*]

ROY

Let me help. I'm a crackerjack at setting up a table. [*Gets up and helps* INA. MRS. PAYTON *arises.*]

MRS. PAYTON

I shall leave you children a minute. I've got a little mending to do.

[*Exit to bedroom.* INA *and* ROY *work in silence.*]

ROY

Ina . . . this will be a terrible blow to your mother. . . .

INA

[*Thoughtful attitude. Nods.*]

Yes. [*Brings dishes from kitchen and sets table.*]

ROY

Ina, you will wait for me until I finish law, won't you?

INA

[*Facing him.*]

This is no time to talk . . . about that.

ROY

Why . . . Why can't we talk now?

INA

Because. . . . Oh, let's not talk about it.

[ROY *comes near and attempts to caress her.*]

INA

Don't, Roy. . . . Please don't.

ROY

You love me, Ina . . . then why. . . .

INA

Oh, Roy. . . . Don't you see. . . . We've got to save Billy and mother.

ROY

I understand, honey. . . . We are going to save them . . . but you can tell me if you will wait for me.

INA

You'll be tired of me by then. You will have other girls by then. You know you are a regular sheik.

ROY

You know that I don't care for any one but you, Ina. . . . You know I'll never marry any one but you. You are always doubting me . . . but I'm going to show you that I mean every word that I say.

INA

I believe you do now . . . but will you then?

ROY

Don't doubt, sweetheart. . . . Please believe me.

INA

[*Surveying table which is set.*]
Dinner is ready. I wonder where Billy went?
[*Enter* BILLY.]
Been wondering about you. Where have you been?

BILLY

[*Hangs up hat and walks nervously about.*]
I had to go out and get some air. . . . I couldn't stand it . . . being in here.

INA

[*Putting finger to lips and pointing to door of bedroom.*]
Sh! Mother is in there.

BILLY

[*Thinking aloud.*]
I'm going to do it. . . . I've got to do it.

INA

Do what, Billy?

BILLY

I'm going to Burton to-night . . . I can't stand it any longer.

ROY

[*Decisively.*]
No, you aren't.

BILLY

I must. . . . It's the only way out.

INA

But mother. . . .

MRS. PAYTON

[*Opening bedroom door.*]
Your croquettes smell good, Ina. Is dinner ready?

INA

Yes, I was just going . . . to call you. . . . Billy, put the chairs around, please.

[Billy *puts chairs around table.* Mrs. Payton *enters room and sits at table.*]

MRS. PAYTON

Children, I'm famished. My, but it's nice to have children. I don't know what I would do without you all. Roy, you sit on this side of me, and then I will have both of my sons near me.

[*Every one sits but* Roy.]

ROY

Thanks, Mrs. Payton . . . but I've got to run along.

MRS. PAYTON

You are welcome, son.

BILLY

Don't go. . . . Wait and I'll walk up the street with you after dinner.

INA

I'm peeved. . . . You just don't want to eat any of my croquettes.

ROY

Well, you all seem to look pretty healthy after your cooking. I guess I would survive . . . but I've just thought of something I must do. [*Picks up book with examina-*

*tion.*] I am borrowing your book, Billy. . . . I'm going by to see Burton. . . .

[INA *and* BILLY *are startled. They get up.*]

INA

Roy!

BILLY

Don't take that book. . . I'm going there.

ROY

[*From doorway with forced smile.*]
Sit down and eat your dinner. . . . I'm coming back. . . . Be ready, Ina and we'll go to see a show. Good-by, Mrs. Payton. [*Exit.*]

MRS. PAYTON

Good-by, son. He's a wonderful boy . . . almost as wonderful as you, Billy. . . . Eat your dinner, both of you and stop mincing your food. He is coming back.

CURTAIN

Antar of Araby

# ANTAR OF ARABY

A Play

by

Maud Cuney-Hare

Adapted to the capacity of advanced students in high school and college.

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## CHARACTERS

NARRATOR, *a scribe at Court*
STRANGER, *a traveler, caravaning*
ANTAR, *an Arabian-Abyssinian slave*
SHEDAD, *his father, an Arabian Prince*
SEEMEAH, *an Arabian noblewoman, wife of Shedad*
ABLA, *an Arabian maiden of noble birth*
SULAYMAH, *an Arabian Prince, father of Abla and brother to Shedad*
ROBAB, *an Arabian noblewoman, mother of Abla*
PRINCE MALIK, *brother to Shedad and Sulaymah, son of the King*
KING ZOHEIR, *Chief and kin of the tribe of Abs*
AMARAH, *Chief of neighboring tribe, admirer of Abla*
SHIBOOB, *half-brother to Antar, son of Abyssinian parents*
BEDOUIN
COURIER
SELMA
RABIAT
ANIS
MAIDENS OF ROYAL BLOOD
CYMBAL GIRLS
MABED, *famous Court Singer*
SOLO DANCERS
ABYSSINIAN SLAVE GIRL
GRECIAN SLAVE GIRL

ATTENDANTS
WARRIORS

"Bear not malice, O, Shiboob, for of malice good never came."—ANTAR

"Mercy, my Lord, is the noblest quality of the noble."—ANTAR

## NOTES ON CHARACTERS

Antar—courageous, fearless, determined yet sensitive; of great physical strength; talented; possesses fine poetical gift.

Abla—loving, gentle, faithful.

Robab—mother of abla—vain, prejudiced, sarcastic. To some extent appreciative of talent.

Shedad—stubborn, without prejudice but lacks independence of spirit; weak; affectionate.

Amarah—a dandy, a coxcomb, small-minded, sarcastic, vain.

King Zoheir—great-hearted, noble, proud, dignified.

Prince Malik—his third son—mild and gentle, fair-minded; of protective spirit.

Sulaymah—brother of malik and shedad—crafty, cruel, deceitful.

Shiboob—Abyssinian half-brother to antar. The son of zebeeba who was stolen and enslaved by tribe of Abs. Brave, faithful and devoted.

See "Arabian Knights" for various Arabian customs. For salutation, place right hand on breast, kiss the hand, then touch forehead and turban. Between friends, clasp hands, kiss own hands respectively and then touch the forehead.

## LIGHTING CUE SHEET

Act 1—Picnic scene—ends in call to war.
Desert Scene—Daytime—Color: pale rose.
Act 2—Same as 1—Early evening. Color: amber.
Act 3—Twilight in the Desert—Blue, white and amber.
Act 4—Desert Scene as Act 1—Yellow deepens to gold.

## ENTR'ACTE MUSIC

(Suggested)

Overture—"Antar".....Clarence Cameron White

### Act I

Incidental music:

Twilight Dance (*from Four Moorish Pictures*)
Montague Ring

The Pursuit:

The Desert Patrol (*from Syrian Pictures*)
Montague Ring

Bedouin .....Montague Ring

### Act II

Incidental music:

Dance of Triumph (*from Four Moorish Pictures. An Eastern Suite*) .....Montague Ring

Warrior's Dance—Orgie (*Oriental Sketches*)
Tschaikowsky

Bayaderes (*Babylonian Suite*).....Justin Elie
Beneath the Crescent Moon (*Arabian Suite*)
Montague Ring

ACT III

Prayer Before Battle (*Four Moorish Pictures*)
Montague Ring
Caravan (*Arabian Suite*).....Montague Ring

ACT IV

Incidental music:
Slave Girl's Dance (*from Syrian Pictures*)
Montague Ring

"Four Moorish Pictures"—An Eastern Suite for piano or for a small or large orchestra, dedicated to Maud Cuney-Hare—is composed by "Montague Ring" (Miss Ira Aldridge of London), daughter of the famous Negro tragedian. Ascherber, Hopwood and Crew, publishers. All compositions noted above can be secured from Carl Fischer, music publisher, New York.

## PROPERTIES AND COSTUMES

The properties called for in the play of "Antar of Araby" may be prepared or secured without difficulty or great expense. The use of one setting with slight change for the second and third acts, simplifies the work of the stage crew as well as the person in charge of sets. Should a gilded chair be unavailable for the king's seat, boxes covered with thrown rugs of oriental design and large pillows of richly colored goods—cotton or wool—are effective for seats for king and attendants, as well as the ladies of the tribe who sit on pillows or on the ground.

Spears for warriors can be made of beaver-board or heavy cardboard painted with aluminum radiator paint. Flat wicker baskets are used for fruits which may be those of imitation lemons, grapes and raisins and dates. Cookies or small cakes are served in the first act—small fruit may be added to the picnic eatables. Cigar boxes or other small boxes covered with gold paint or gold paper, are used for trinkets which may consist of broken jewelry or trifling glittering baubles borrowed or contributed by friends. Slave girls wear ear-rings and bead necklaces but no finger-rings, while royal women of the tribe wear finger-rings and many bracelets and necklaces.

Flowing robes for warriors are best made of unbleached muslin or heavy cotton. Richly colored cotton goods or inexpensive cloth dyed in blues, orange, reds, yellow, green and purple, as well as misprint goods make effective robes for chiefs and ladies of the tribe. These can easily be painted with simple designs in gold or colors. Antar's last gown should far surpass all others. A striking costume can be made of cream colored sateen, painted with a bold design of red and gold for the inner straight frock while the outer flowing robe is fashioned of a rich blue painted with a silver border. With a wrapped turban wound with imitation jewels, the complete costume is not only becoming to Antar who must be of dark complexion, but it gives an impression of wealth and magnificence.

# ANTAR OF ARABY

A Play — By Maud Cuney-Hare

## Prologue

Narrator: (*A scribe of the tribe of Abs*)

(*Speaks before rise of curtain—to the audience*)

O, sons and daughters of noble chiefs: Hold and listen to my words. This is a tale of war, of love and of chivalry. It is the story of a far-famed warrior whose exploits every one feared in the days of wars. He was the irresistible Antar, of undaunted courage; one whose poems made his name renowned and his fame secure.

But you shall hear how Antar, son of the black-faced Zebeeba, met the foe and won his love at point of spear.

List! And may peace dwell with thee as long as the western and northern breeze shall blow!

Mayst thou be secure and live under the shadow of happiness as long as the lightning flashes over Hedjaz!

(*Walks off stage*)

CURTAIN RISES

## Act I

(*Color, pale rose*)

*Springtime at the lake, on the edge of the desert. Girls carry instruments.* Abla *is seated in the center of a group of girls of the tribe of Abs. Two attendants,*

*whose duty it is to cool the milk in the wind, are in the background.* ANTAR *serves* SEEMEAH, ROBAB *and then* ABLA; *then steps apart. He lounges against ropes of the tent which opens to the left.* ABLA *is richly dressed, decorated with jewels. Girls are seated on the ground tent L. C.*

SELMA

[*Standing.*]

Now are the waters gliding through the gardens; the nightingale and dove pour out their plaintive strain and make each lover weep; the gentle zephrs whisper and the branches move in softest measure.

ANIS

[*Second girl.*]

The boughs dance in the groves, among the trees in graceful movement; the dewdrops fall and the flowers and the trees are studded with its pearls.

[SCRIBE *enters with a stranger who looks inquiringly at* ANTAR—*takes C. S.*]

STRANGER

Who is yon haughty muser? Is he indeed a slave?

SCRIBE

Ah, a strange story his: Once upon a time when the illustrious warriors of the family of Carad journeyed afar to seek their fortunes, Shedad, the noble leader, discovered the tribe of Jezela—a tribe of great riches. Between the hills was a black woman grazing camels. She was uncommonly beautiful and alluring, and made a

great impression on the heart of Shedad. She was completely hid in her hair, which appeared like the dark shades of night.

STRANGER

[*Thoughtfully.*]

In blackness there is some virtue, if you observe its beauty well. Were it not for the black mole on a fair cheek, how would lovers feel the value of its brilliancy? Were not musk black it would not be precious. Were it not for the black of the eyes where would be its beauty? and thus it is that black ambergris has the purer fragrance!

SCRIBE

Aye, Shedad gave the warriors the booty that they might renounce the woman, and so he kept her to himself. Her name was Zebeeba and two children were hers, Jerser, the elder, and Shiboob, the younger. When the time came, she brought forth a boy. He was like the fragment of a cloud. His limbs and form were like unto Shedad and the father was overjoyed at seeing him.

RABIAT

[*Speaking to the girls.*]

The season is delightful—let it pass in pleasure and misfortune begone. Be merry and let not a day pass without enjoyment. Cakes for the feast! Cakes for the feast! [*Holds up a basket.*]

STRANGER

[*Oblivious to merrymakers.*]

And the boy?

SCRIBE

The child grew up straight and strong and his name Antar became known. He accompanied his mother to the pastures and tended the flocks.
One day, Daji, a great bully who had no compassion on the poor, cruelly misused an old woman.

STRANGER

Ah! Time had aimed its arrows at her!

SCRIBE

Aye; Antar could not endure the sight and seized Daji and dashed him to the ground. From that day forth, King Zoheir and his son Prince Malik conceived great affection for Antar. But alas for a heart that passion has melted, for Antar is distracted for love of Abla.

STRANGER

[*Gazing at* ABLA.]
She is as lovely as the full moon and perfect in beauty, the narcissus of the garden, the pearl of the desert.
[*Exit with* SCRIBE.]

SELMA

The gardens sparkle with their wealth of lovely maidens. Their beauty is perfection—they are slayers and piercers with their arrows and their darts; archers and strikers, the enchantresses of men.

[*Slave girls beat cymbals—a group dance; slaves carry around cooling drinks.*]

ANTAR

[*Musingly.*]
The lovely virgin has pierced my heart with an arrow

of a glance for which there is no cure. She moves and I should say it was the Tamarisk that waves its branches to the southern breeze.

[*Moves forward.*]

O Abla, when I most despair, love for thee and all its weaknesses are my sole hope. Should fortune and my father favor me, I will requite myself for all its changes by my fearless spirit.

ABLA

[*To one of the slaves.*]

Mix water in my cup of wine and give me to drink. Drive away sorrow and quicken my joy.

[*Attendants serve—one bears a jug of water, the other wine which they mix. Women continue to make merry seated on the ground.* ABLA *reclines. Girls serve* ABLA.]

ANTAR

Her charms bewitch all those about her and all are eager to offer her their service! They live in her beauty and her loveliness and receive new spirit from her grace. I live but as the victim of my love. I shall conceal my ardor in my soul till I can see that I am amply fortunate to serve her.

[*Enter* KING ZOHEIR *with group of warriors, R. U. E.* SHEDAD, MALIK *and others.* SHEDAD *is approached by* SEEMEAH *but is interrupted when he turns angrily to* ANTAR—*Men sit on ground opposite women—King on raised seat, L. C.*]

SHEDAD

Whence came the cattle and whence the mare that excites wonder? Thou wanderest alone in these wilds and rocks

and every Arab that thou canst meet thou killest him and carest not whether he is of the tribe of Cahtan or Adna. "No good will come of thee!"

ANTAR

[*Diffidently.*]
They were stray cattle separated from the rest.

SHEDAD

[*Threateningly while* SEEMEAH *appears anxious.*]
Evil and abomination are rooted in thee—these are no horses strayed from their owners.

SEEMEAH

[*Throwing her arms about* ANTAR.]
Oh, Shedad, he does not deserve such ill treatment.

SHEDAD

What has happened to this wretch that thou feelest so much affection and tenderness?

SEEMEAH

In thine absence, he alone attacked nigh four-score horsemen and drove them back in both confusion and despair. O Shedad, hadst thou seen me, my face uncovered and the women carried off behind the warriors! No resource at hand and their veils trailing in the dust of the earth.
Abla, too, they mounted behind a warrior, whilst her tears streamed down her cheeks. The slaves fled all trembling in affright. Then Antar plunged into the midst of them! Their horsemen fled through fear; this one was slain, that one made a captive; Antar protected us!

After he had comforted us all, he pursued them—O it is right that I should respect him; mine honor he protected.

SELMA

He preserved the honor of us all. 'Tis meet that we should all respect him.

SHEDAD

'Tis most wonderful he kept this secret—it is surprising—and his submission to be bound to me!

[*Walks toward group of men.*]

ANTAR

[*Who has stood unconcerned, turns to* SEEMEAH.]

Oh, is it from Seemeah that these tears flow in anguish? Shall her form shadow me? Can blows jar me? O when the troopers start forth and the black dust rolls over them, then make use of me. If I do not disperse them in the clouds of their contending spears, may I not be permitted e'er to drink! May the raindrops never moisten me.

SEEMEAH

Men are of two kinds: one whose heart is brittle glass—the other whose heart is rock. O King, if thou art wise and good, be kind to Antar, for he hath protected the women and children.

KING ZOHEIR

Greatly rejoiced am I, at the courage of Antar. I anticipated this at the time that he slew the coward slave of my son Shas. I knew he would be the refuge of all peti-

tioners. Who can perform such deeds or acts! Doubtless he will rise superior to all his contemporaries. Antar, dost hear?

[ANTAR *goes toward the king—kisses his hand and the king presents him a cup.*]

PRINCE MALIK

O, Antar, say to us some of thy verses.

ANTAR

Willingly, my Lord.

[*Recites.*]

Glory is bound to the back of steeds; victory on the day of horrors lives in the sword, never rises the battle dust on the day of fight but my pliant spear assists me.

How many horsemen fly from the encounter of arms when the war dust rises; they fly and are repulsed; then rush I into the changing war.

Come on, then, it is the lion who never drew his sword but that every hero dreaded the encounter—

[*Interrupted by* ABLA'S *mother.*]

ROBAB

I hear thou makest verses 'pon my daughter.

ANTAR

Verily I exalt her in my verses all that God has granted her of loveliness.

ROBAB

[*In scorn.*]

If thou art in earnest in what thou sayest, let us hear some of thy verses in praise of her charms.

ANTAR

Thou art my sovereign in my very blood; thou art my mistress, and in these is all my confidence. O Abla, my description cannot portray thee.
Were I to say thy face is like the full moon of the Heavens, wherein that full moon is the eye of the antelope? Were I to say that thou art like unto the branch of the Erak tree, oh thou shamest it in the grace of thy form. In thy forehead is my guide to truth, and in the night of thy tresses I wander afar. Beneath thy veil is the rosebud of my life; thine eyes are guarded with a multitude of arrows. Oh, thy face is like the full moon of heaven, allied to light, but far, far from my hopes.
I love thee with the love of a hero noble born, but I'm content with thine imaginary phantom.
[ABLA, *coquetting behind her veil, shows interest—* ROBAB *displeasure.*]

ROBAB

[*Offended, rises to address* ANTAR *with disdain.*]
I had no thought that thou couldst speak with so much eloquence—thou art endowed with high and noble qualities. I shall speak to my husband that he marry thee to Khemisa, the pretty servant of my daughter.

ANTAR

[*Shocked.*]
Ne'er will I be wed unless with her my soul adores.

ABLA

[*Whispers shyly.*]
May God accomplish thy wish, may He grant thee the

woman thou lovest and may thou live in peace and happiness.

MALIK

[*To* SHEDAD.]

How long wilt thou reject thy son, Antar? Dost not thy heart yearn after him?

KING ZOHEIR

Let me raise his head above a state of servitude and thou wilt see what he will do for thee in return for such a favor.

SHEDAD

[*To the king.*]

Who is the Arab that ever did such a thing before me?

PRINCE MALIK

Let the Arabs follow thine example; good practices are to be admired even though they may be new.

SHEDAD

[*Whispers to king.*]

My Lord, let us consult about this.

ANTAR

[*To* MALIK.]

Oh thou upon whose lofty spirit my one hope depends; thou hast granted to me favors; thou art mine only refuge; O thou who hast rescued me from death and perdition, all my life will I thank thee.

KING ZOHEIR

From this day forth, I will not permit him to tend the flocks. He has distinguished himself by glorious deeds.

Let him now run the career of victory with the warriors of the country.

ANTAR

[*To the king.*]

Champion of the Abs! O thou King of the age; may thy renown be ever celebrated in every land for thou art just and beneficent; mayest thou live a sovereign in glory as long as the dove pours forth its plaintive note.

[*Rejoicing begins but is interrupted by sound of disturbance in the distance; grows nearer; an outer cry is heard. Offstage. Oh, by Cahtan.*]

WARRIOR

What thinkest thou of the enemy, verily they are eager for their prey.

COURIER

[*Entering R. U. E.*]

To arms! To arms!

[*General confusion—warriors gird themselves with their swords.*]

ANTAR

[*Ahead of others.*]

Hear the dastard! By the father of mankind, I will make their heads thankless!

[*Warriors crowd out to the fray shouting: Oh, by Abs! Oh, by Adnan!*]

KING ZOHEIR

[*To* ANTAR *as he goes out.*]

God protect thee, thou black in face and fair in deeds, thou ornament of men.

[*Women are left behind crowding together in attitude of alarm, while they gaze after the warriors toward exit.*]

CURTAIN

End of Act I

## Act II

(*Amber*)

*Scene same as Scene I. Early evening, two weeks later. The women standing with* Abla *are present.* King *is seated on raised seat of burnished gold; there are women attendants.* Amarah *is present conversing with* Sulaymah, who stands near the King. *Enter victorious warrior R. U. E. with* Prince Shedad *and* Malik. Antar *is now in warrior's robe and enters with the warriors. Two girls beating cymbals precede the warriors.*

COURIER

Victory, King Zoheir! Victory!

KING ZOHEIR

May God never remove from our eyes the noble youths; warriors when they alight, ennobled when they mount! Their fiery steeds rise with them and round their necks are circles of buds like the basilflower.

[*Women do obeisance to warriors.*]

PRINCE MALIK

There is but one among them the lion of his tribe, chief, and he is Antar!

WOMEN

[*In surprise.*]

"Antar!"

MALIK

Yes, "Antar," a noble warrior; he has done the deeds of a hero; Antar rushed upon them and drove away all the male and female camels and high-priced horses that belonged to the tribes of Cahtan.

ANTAR

[*Modestly.*]

My horse, when the dust of battle enclosed him on all sides, sprang against the thrusts of the tribe. A party of Absians accompanied me, whose high celebrity is extended o'er the deserts.

[*Indicates warriors.*]

BEDOUIN

The desert was in tumult, swords made hot work, the cowards sought to fly, but found no way to escape. Antar appeared then like a lion in armor and the warriors followed him.

[*Girls seated,* ROBAB *remains standing.*]

ROBAB

[*A jealous group aside.*]

O shame, of misfortune, that a slave should conquer and the chiefs and lords be discomforted!

ANTAR

I am the slave of whom it shall be said that I encountered a thousand free-born heroes; my heart was created harder than steel, how then can I fear sword or spear? I will sacrifice myself for the tribes with the long spear until it be honored and respected.

AMARAH

[*Boastingly, to first warrior.*]

To-day will I exhibit my valor and courage, the warriors and the horsemen shall stand in awe of me. Abla shall mark the deeds of a ferocious lion. When it is all over with that infernal slave, I shall be glorified among the Arabs!

SEEMEAH

[*To* ANTAR.]

O knight of the troop! May each of thy foes tremble before thee! for truly thou standest alone unequaled in the universe, matchless in the mountains and the valleys.

AMARAH

No welcome, no welcome but to the black slave who has returned safe!

SULAYMAH

[*To* AMARAH.]

Forsooth, King Zoheir is not to be satisfied but by requiring us to attend him.

KING ZOHEIR

I felicitate ye, O my tribe, on what has occurred this day which God has vouchsafed to honor with his favor.
God has ennobled the tribe of Abs and has endowed them with virtues the Arab possesses not in their nature.

[SHEDAD *kisses* ANTAR *between the eyes, offerings of gold and silver are made to warriors and to* ANTAR. *The princes throw gifts in the aprons of the slaves.*]

MALIK

[*Puts hand in* ANTAR'S.]

O sons of my uncle, O ye that are here present, whether friend, relation or companion, let every one who wishes to recompense this hero according to his power do so; for there is no one in the whole tribe but Antar who can defend our property and goods or protect our family and our friends.

ANTAR

O King, all this proceeds from thy gracious favor toward thy slave who is not worth the dust beneath thy feet and who can ne'er requite thy favors!

[*He starts to sit among the slaves, but the king calls him.*]

KING ZOHEIR

May God ever protect thee, thou valiant knight of the horse, thou plunger into the night! By the mover of the heavens, no one but thou shalt be this day my companion. Come towards me!

ANTAR

[*Kissing hand of the king.*]

I am but thy slave!

[*King rises and seats* ANTAR *beside him and converses. All make merry and watch solo dance.*]

KING ZOHEIR

A dance, maiden of the Tenth!

SHEDAD

[*Turning to* SULAYMAH.]

O son of my father and mother, my soul is greatly vexed.

Some disturbance, I fear, will arise throughout the tribe and our blood will be demanded and our persons pay the forfeit.

SULAYMAH

[*In anger.*]

O my brother, thou hast hit the mark and if thou dost not take measure to put this slave to death, he will surely endanger our lives.

[SHEDAD *turns from him in horror.*]

ABLA

[*To a girl companion indicates* ANTAR.]

He appears like unto the flower on the Judas-tree.

SHEDAD

[*To* SULAYMAH.]

By the faith of an Arab, our education has not been lost on Antar.

MALIK

How should he not be noble? thou art the cause of his existence. He is of thy loins, reject him not, for truly he belongs to thee.

ANTAR

[*At his father's feet.*]

O master, grant me my due as others far and wide have done. Bestow on me what I so much desire.

SHEDAD

What wouldst thou? Make known thy wish that I may be kind to thee.

ANTAR

I request of thee the rank and dignity of an Arab, acknowledge me as thy son and thyself as my father, so that my rank may be known.
In truth I will reward thee, as no one else can.

SHEDAD

[*Vexed.*]
Dost thou forget that thou hast tended the sheep and camels? Verily the robe of King Zoheir plays about thy loins and his words float upon thine ears!
Thou hast indeed made a command and raised thyself on high.
[*Turns from him.*]

ANTAR

[*Goes toward slaves—R.*]
Darkness hovers over me and my tears stream down in torrents. I live desolate; there is no one like me; a lover without friends or a companion. I am the friend of sorrow and desire.

ABLA

[*Approaching him.*]
Am I now of no consequence or value unto thee?

ANTAR

Oh, grant thou, thine embrace, oh light of mine eyes, and save me from mine own grief. Oh daughter of Sulaymah, will fortune ever bless me and cure my heart of the sorrow of love?

ABLA

No pleasure have I felt but in thy presence.

KING ZOHEIR

[*Rising.*]

O ye tribes of Abs and Adnan, and all ye that are here assembled, ye all know the purity of my connection and my rank, yet let Antar be called as I am called, "Abool-farwaris," for he is, by the faith of an Arab, my cousin. He who honors him, honors me and he who despises him, despises me.

BEDOUIN

Welcome, welcome, to his cousin, thou reliever of sorrow!
Who is the most determined hero, ennobled o'er the rest?
King Zoheir the ruler of the age!

[MALIK *embraces* ANTAR, *so do a number of others who then sit down, jesting, talking.*]

AMARAH

[*To* SULAYMAH.]

I have something particular to communicate. I wish to be related to thee. I am a suitor and desire to wed thy daughter.

SULAYMAH

My daughter and I are the most obedient of thy servants.

AMARAH

[*Ingratiatingly.*]

I have done this out of my anxiety for her on account of this shepherd, a disgrace among the Arabs of the desert!

SULAYMAH

[*Offers his hand in delight.*]

O Chief, my daughter is thy slave, present thou the marriage dower and presents.

[*Girls have been listening.*]

SELMA

No, no, Antar will not leave a single man alive of all the tribe of Abs.

AMARAH

And pray, who is Antar? If the poor wretch presumes to interfere with me, I will show him the valor of Amarah, the munificent! I'll show him what I will do to him.

ANTAR

Fate will repay thee for it has devoted thee to fight with me and to the horrors of my strength.
Thou art indeed like the moth, that when it sees the flames, imagines its safety in its destruction.

BEDOUIN

[*To* Warriors.]
'Twill be nothing but evil and ill luck to us all from this match, for whoever espouses that girl, will rise in the morning a headless trunk.

AMARAH

[*Tauntingly.*]
Black skin, thou lookest vastly miserable indeed.

ANTAR

Thou wouldst abuse me, vile wretch, for that I am the color of that night whose dangers I dare. If thou desirest to fight me, come boldly to the hero who will make thee taste the food of death e'en from the tip of his fingers.

AMARAH

Son of Shedad, having heard of thy gift of eloquence, it is my intention to give thee a robe suitable to such as thou art.

[*Bows mockingly.*]

ANTAR

[*Enraged.*]

Amarah, I am not worthy of a robe or present from thee, but when thou winnest my mistress, Abla, verily, vile wretch, I will wrench thy neck from off thy shoulders. I will make thine the most fatal of marriages.

[*Runs to* AMARAH, *seizes him and is about to dash him to the ground.* AMARAH *is frightened.*]

WARRIORS AND WOMEN

[*Rise in alarm.*]

Hold! Stop! Fight not!

[WARRIORS *separate men.*]

SULAYMAH

O King, banish him from our country, or send him back to tend the sheep and the camels, or else put him to death!

KING ZOHEIR

I cannot submit to thee, because he has eaten of our meat and our protection is upon him: as to banishing him or sending him back to tend the camels, that does not depend on me, it is Shedad's affair.

SELMA

May no good betide thee, Amarah!

MALIK

By the faith of an Arab, I much fear that some sad disaster will befall my brother for all this.

SHEDAD

I am quite bewildered and distressed about this business; my opinion is that he should return to the care of the animals and repent of his conduct. [*Turns to* ANTAR.] I will not irritate the whole tribe and submit to thee. Thou shalt return to the care of the flock.

SEEMEAH

[*Grieved.*]
Their own reproaches shall be their own murderers.

ANTAR

Do what ye please, a slave has only to obey his master, though he torment and afflict him every day of his life.
[*Turns to* SULAYMAH.]
O, thou who hast maliciously offended me, soon wilt thou feel what the good Deity will effect; for he is imperishable. [*To* ABLA.] O, daughter of Sulaymah, I will mourn till the birds shall know that I am in grief and the plaintive dove shall pity me. I will kiss the earth where thou art, then my passion may be cooled by the moisture on the ground.
O Abla, I will wail over the track of the baggage-camels and the horse. Have compassion then upon me, if thy love is lasting; my vows indeed will survive for my love is immortal.

ABLA

O they have no mercy! O that I had never lived in this age of traitors who only see in thee my misery and dishonor!

ANTAR

[*Attempts to approach* ABLA, *is restrained by her father.*]

This is farewell, for I know not when we shall meet. Shalt thou and I e'er meet again as on Mount Saadi? Or will the message come from thee to announce that thou art in the land of Nedj?

ABLA

O, Antar Aboolfawaris! I have not a breath of life remaining. O, then how can I be patient under my sorrow and my passion?

[*Men force* ANTAR *out, exit L. U. E.* AMARAH *and* SULAYMA *show satisfaction.*]

SEEMEAH

O full moon of perfection! O Lion of battles! we are grieved for thee!

CURTAIN

END OF ACT II

## Act III

*(Blue, white and amber)*

*Twilight in the desert.* Antar *dressed as a shepherd sits lonely and in sorrow.*

ANTAR

"O dwelling of my Abla! Speak to me from Jiwa. Hail to thee, dwelling of my Abla! Secure and safe be thou." Abla's spirit appeared to me in my sleep and thrice I kissed her within the veil. It bade me adieu but it left in me a fire that I feel burning through my bones. Were I not left in solitude alone and could I not quench the fire of my passion with tears, my heart would melt. But I will not complain, though all my fears are on thy account, O thou perfect full moon! How can I ever hope to approach thee, whilst the lions of the forest guard thy tent! By truth of my love for thee my heart can ne'er be cured but by patience.

SHIBOOB

[*Dressed as a shepherd, enters L. U.*]

Why, O brother, shouldst thou by my side again attend the flocks and the camels? Truly Abla and her father have brought ill luck on thee and the whole tribe of Abs. Thy complexion is no injury to thee nor the name of thy mother Zeebeba, when ye exercise thy courage amongst the foe! The place for thee is on the highways.

ANTAR

O Shiboob, my brother, thou mayst see what I have suffered and what has befallen me. They have driven me

from the one whom I love, and I am plunged into the well of the water of banishment.
I rail against fortune that relents to no upbraider, and I demand security from the cruelties of fortune. She one day promises fair and excites my pride, but truly I know all her promises are false. My relations have acted like scorpions! Among themselves they call me the son of Zeebeba, but in the tumultuous rush of horsemen, I'm the son of nobles.
Were it not for my love, one like me would not humble himself to such as they; the lion of the waste would not fear the foxes.
Speak to me that my heart may be eased of its anxieties.

SHIBOOB

But list to the message Abla sends thee—

ANTAR

[*Eagerly.*]
Haste then to speak—be speedy in thy message.

SHIBOOB

"Tell him for me" just now, she said—"Soothe the heart of my cousin, Antar, and tell him that if my father even makes my grave my resting place, none but him do I desire, none but him will I choose."

ANTAR

O lightnings, waft my salutation to her and to all the places and pastures where she dwells.
O, ye dwellers in the forest of tamarisks, if I die, mourn for me when my eyes are plucked out by the hungry fowls of the air.

O, ye steeds, mourn for a knight who could engage the lions of death in the field of battle. Alas, I am an outcast and in sorrow, I am humbled into galling fetters, fetters that cut my soul!

SHIBOOB

Thus she bade me adieu and wept, saying: "In the morning I am like a bird but the hand of fortune has clipped my wings. My father has betrothed me by force to mine enemy. By thy truth, I will never break my vows to thee—question the gales of Nedj of my health, when they blow in the morning."

ANTAR

May the peace of God be with thee, O Abla. The legs of Aloe sparkle in the fire and the flame blaze high in the air. The sweetness of your vapor soothe my heart, when it is wafted with a northerly wind. Its brilliancy and flame are like the face of my beloved Abla—I must love the tribe of Abs were they even to shed my blood unrevenged, such is my love for thee.

SHIBOOB

[*In reverie.*]

Ours, my brother, is a singular history.

ANTAR

I will establish myself at Mecca, near the holy shrine, and there will make my complaints to the Lord of mankind.

SHIBOOB

Do so, my brother; wait patiently for Abla, and comfort thyself.

ANTAR

If, O tear, thou canst not relieve me in my sorrow, perchance thou may quench the flame that doth consume me. On thee, O daughter of Sulaymah, be the peace of God; the blessing of a sorrowing heart-grieved lover.
Soon will my tribe remember me when the horse advance —every noble warrior trampling and stamping over them.

[*Disturbance is heard in the distance—Enter* SHEDAD *with* SULAYMAH; *they run into* ANTAR *and* SHIBOOB *who are seated on the ground.*]

SHEDAD

Canst thou in an hour like this employ thyself in tending the cattle and the camels? Behold the enemy have succeeded in their attempts and have plundered our property and slain our horsemen—

ANTAR

[*Coldly.*]
What wouldst thou wish me to do? I am indeed grieved at thy distress. O, that I could rescue thee from destruction and defeat, but I am a slave—I am not worthy of doing anything. I am not worthy of your consideration.

SHEDAD

What means this indifference about us?

ANTAR

Hast thou ever heard of any one asking protection from a slave?

SHEDAD

Mount—descend and destroy the enemy and I will grant thee all thy hopes and wishes and I will raise thee to the rank and honor of an Arab.

ANTAR

[*Suspicious.*]
What is this rank and honor?

SULAYMAH

[*Impatiently.*]
Oh, my nephew, drive away the enemy from us.

SHEDAD

I will recognize thee as my son, and as part of my heart.

SULAYMAH

Oh, my nephew, descend and drive away the enemy from us and I will acknowledge thee of our family.

ANTAR

And wilt thou give Abla to me in marriage?

SULAYMAH

Yes, by the God who created and beautified her.
[*Distress is heard in distance—cries of women.*]

COURIER

[*Enters L. E.*]
Arise, ye Absians! Your dwellings are destroyed; loud winds whistle about them—nothing remains but the echo.

They have driven away your children—disgrace is set loose as misfortune descends!
Come on, take vengeance. Couldst thou, oh Antar, behold the grief of Abla as she calls out. Couldst thou but see her, how her tears flow bedewing her garments and her robes. Come on, engage the foe!

SHIBOOB

Mount thy horse, O my brother, for thou hast no more to say. Put to rout these hateful foes.

[*Hands* ANTAR *his spear.*]

ANTAR

[*Who has been hastily preparing to go, rushes out impetuously as he shouts center stage.*]

"He who is ambitious of honor bears no malice."
Formerly indeed I tended their camels, but now I protect them when they are in affliction.
My sword is my father and the spear in hand is my father's brother and I am the son of my day in the heights of the deserts!"

[*All exit L. U. E. except* SULAYMAH *who loiters behind, center stage.*]

SULAYMAH

Antar is unloosened like a savage lion who threatens! He is to be sent to conquer the Persians! How can I thwart him!

CURTAIN

END OF ACT III

## Act IV

(*Yellow deepens to gold*)

*Same as* Act I. *Few months later. Tent to right, women grouped near;* Warriors *to left. The* King *with attendants are present.* Abla, *forward, is alone and grieving for news of* Antar. Mabed, *the singer, stands near the* King.

KING

Aweary am I of life's toil and travail. I know what to-day unfolds, what before it was yesterday; but blind do I stand before the knowledge to-morrow brings! Come, Mabed, sing to us the incomparable Lahns!

MABED

Willingly, my Lord.

ABLA

[*Stands apart.*]

O western breeze give news to me, of that fierce lion, the hero of Abs. How oft has he protected me with the edge of his sword!

O bird of the tamarisk! All the live-long night, drooping he mourns for his mate that is gone and returns not. This is thy sorrow and to-morrow thou art relieved; but alas, what is the state of the captive of love and anguish!

SHIBOOB

[*Enters travel-stained and weary.*]

The affliction is extra! Fixed is it in my heart. Evil is let loose upon me. Murdered is the hero of the brave,—Antar!

ATTENDANT

[*In horror.*]
Murdered? Our hero—Antar?

KING ZOHIER

Where is Sulaymah? I wish to speak to him about this affair!

SULAYMAH

[*Coming forward.*]
I asked of him a thousand Asafeer camels that my daughter might boast of them; for in our tribe there are none—nor are there any like them in Cahtan. This is all I asked of him and then I would have made him a marriage feast out of my own property.

SHIBOOB

Antar gave way and consented and he knew not that the camels were in the kingdom of Monzar, the King of the princes of the Arabs. His joy was excessive and he was all delight.
He awakened me, his brother, and told me to get ready his horse (Abjer).
I trembled and was confounded for I knew the country. We departed over the wilds and deserts and set out in quest of the land of Hirah. Over the plain he urged on Abjer. But the Prince and his troopers overtook Antar and poured down upon him from all sides. Thus in the midst of dangers, lo, his horse stumbled and throwing him from the ground rushed from out of the thick dust and tumult, his saddle unoccupied.
I, Shiboob, gave feet to the winds and sought the wild desert whilst slaves and shepherds pursued me.

[*Overcome—resumes.*]

As soon as I was safe, I traveled on 'till morning, passing o'er plains and deserts, but most grievous to me was the thought of returning to the tribe of Abs, and the triumphs of Antar's foes and the envious.

[*Weeping for* ANTAR.]

O, Knight of the Horse, O, that the day had never been that I sáw thee felled to the earth.

SEEMEAH

His uncle has in his wiles and frauds [*indicating* SULAYMAH] made thee drink of the cup.
The affliction is extreme.

[SEEMEAH *goes toward* ABLA.]

SHIBOOB

Antar sighed from his overcharged heart: "Tell Zoheir and Malik, tell Abla of me that I felled down the armies on the day of terror—but my steed hurled me upon the battlefield. O Shiboob, haste then,—I implore thee, by the pillars at Mecca, by the sacred plains, waft my salutation to Zoheir and his royal sons!"

ABLA

O grave, mine eyes have renounced sweet sleep— Alas, alas, for thee! Felled to the ground art thou.

[AMARAH *is seen aside, showing great pleasure.*]

His foes exult when they see my agony and misery.
Ne'er will I surrender myself to another were he to come with a thousand charms.

SHEDAD

[*In grief.*]

Alas! the misery and wretchedness that have befallen

me. He is gone, how long will my tears flow in sorrow for him!

[ANIS *and* SELMA *comfort* ABLA.]

SELMA

Let the heavens weep his loss and death in tears! May its showers be exhausted forever! Let the air be darkened and the sun be eclipsed!
Let the full moon be veiled also in her station through grief and may she ever be involved in obscurity!

ANIS

O race of Abs, ye have lost a Chief.—Woe to the Absians, now that he is gone, soon will ye encounter misery.

[*To* ABLA.]

My child, let not this sad affair prey upon thy mind; moderate thy grief and thy distress.

ABLA

[*Springing from him.*]

Away! No one slew my cousin but thou; thou wast the man who exposed him to an ocean of perils. Truly will thy treachery soon share the evils thine arm has brought on him.

WARRIOR

Now he is gone, the Absian dames are sorrowing; sighing they mourn the hero of Abs in sobs that give pleasure to the envious.

[*To* SULAYMAH.]

May God destroy Sulaymah, son of Carad, and make him suffer what the tribe of Themood endured!

SULAYMAH

[*To* SHEDAD *tearfully.*]
Indeed, my brother, we also require thy prayers.

SHEDAD

[*Scorning him.*]
Away with this deceit and hypocrisy. Who but thou sent my son to Irak? But there are those who will demand his blood at thy hands and will requite thee for his death.

[SULAYMAH *shrinks away.*]

AMARAH

[*In ecstasy to himself.*]
Now then will Abla be mine.

[SULAYMAH *about to leave, comes to take* ABLA *away.*]

ABLA

Whither, my father, art thou going?

SULAYMAH

We cannot remain here longer, for the very stones cry out against us. It is my wish to absent myself until this is blown over. Amarah will come and demand thee in marriage; thou dost not like him, but I have no excuse by which I can evade his claim.

ABLA

No one but Antar can my heart ever love!
O heart be patient under the agonies I endure. But now can my tears cease to flow! No balm is there to soothe them.

[*Hoofbeats are heard in the distance.*]

PRINCE MALIK

[*Rushing in L. L. E.*]
Good news! Good luck! O family of Card! Antar, son of Shedad is returned!

SHEDAD

Dost thou indeed speak the truth, O Malik?

PRINCE MALIK

Yes, by the ruler of Empires!
[*All start up in joy, as* ANTAR *enters up center.*]

SHEDAD

[*And others in an undercurrent of joy.*]
Welcome joy, begone sorrow! Welcome—by the truth of Lat and Uzza and Hibel!

KING ZOHEIR

Well, this is the most wonderful of all events; it must be noted down and written, as unheard of midst the Arabs or the Persians!
[ANTAR *stands before the* KING *and kisses his hand.*]

KING ZOHEIR

[*Resumes.*]
O, what a glorious day, Antar, thou phœnix of this age! Thou attainer of all glory.

ANTAR

[*To* ABLA.]
Health to thee, beloved of my heart!

ABLA

Art thou alive and in health, O Aboolfawaris! All my misery—all my grief is past.

ANTAR

[*Down center.*]

Now the eyes of the age are illumined and I am returned to life, after my death.

ABLA

O, knight of men! O, thou that excellest every warrior in glory!

ANTAR

Dismiss from thy mind whate'er can pain thee; for by the light of thine eyes and the black of thy eyebrows, I will subdue all the world for thee. I will make thee supreme over the high and low. O, by Abs, O by Adna, I am ever the lover of Abla!

[*They converse.*]

AMARAH

Never, O, never shall I be able to command one kiss or one embrace.

[*Slaves dance, expressing great pleasure.*]

PRINCE MALIK

O Aboolfawaris, every one gains his own in time!

SHEDAD

He is indeed my son and a part of my heart.

PRINCE MALIK

Antar, we will not permit thee to absent thyself nor let this day be followed by thy morrow until thou hast celebrated thy marriage-feast and wedding.

Were we to act justly, all our property and that of all the Absians would be thine, for how often has thou rescued it by the exposure of thy life in our cause.

KING ZOHEIR

Aboolfawaris, I wish to hear from thee the account of thine expedition and what happened to thee—there is no reporter of words and acts like the actor himself. [*To scribe.*] Pay thou attention to Antar and write down all he says that we may be reckoned among the most eloquent Arabs for poetry and propriety of conduct. [*Turns to* SULAYMAH.] My son, what sayst thou? Who is able to thwart the decrees of Providence? And know, my son, the most ignorant of men is an envious man.

ANTAR

[*Center.*]

Wilt thou e'er know, O Abla, the perils I encountered in the land of Irak? My uncle has beguiled me with his hypocrisy toward me in demanding the marriage dower. I plunged myself into a sea of deaths.

I encountered on every side the war dust, so that I thought the thunder had let loose its uproars.

But I did not fail until my horse was exhausted and faltered in the charge and crush of combat.

Then dismounted, I drove the warriors with my sword. At the close of day, I was wearied and made captive. They dragged me to a noble prince, high and magnificent! May his glory endure!

Monzar beheld my acts and the great King Chosroe. whose bounties in his age, stand in lieu of the rain.

O, ye dwellers in the land of Abs, I have received from

Chosroe and his munificence what cannot be described or enumerated!

[*Walks to center back and beckons from behind the tent. Enter two slave girls bearing jewel box and gorgeously dressed slave man with booty.*]

PRINCE MALIK

Whence all this property, this wealth!

A WARRIOR

Doubtless some of the noble kings have stopped her.

ANTAR

Uncle, all this wealth belongs to thy slave, Antar, I have brought the Awafeer camels loaded by the great king, their owner, with gold and precious jewels.

[*The slaves advance to wait on* ANTAR—*he motions them to offer service to the warriors.* ABLA *kisses* ANTAR *between the brows.*]

[*To* ABLA.]

Mark these riches and rule me as thou wilt both night and day!

ABLA

Verily, thy safety is more to me than all thou hast described.

[*Of* ANTAR'S *booty, the* KING *receives small boxes; before each box is a slave girl, Grecian and Abyssinian. There are robes and money, youths and slaves.* ANTAR *makes presents of gold and silver to* SHEDAD *and to* PRINCE MALIK. *He presents* ABLA

*with a tiara, and to* SHEDAD *and the men, robes and gifts.* ANTAR *motions to Abyssinian slave girl to dance—Solo Dance.* KING *commends and speaks.*]

KING ZOHEIR

Hast thou exposed thy life to the sea of death and endangered thy existence for the sake of an Arab girl?

ANTAR

Yea, my Lord, it is love that emboldens man to encounter dangers and horrors, and no lover is excusable but he who tastes the bitterness of absence after the sweetness of enjoyment.
And there is no peril to be apprehended but from a look beneath the corner of a veil, and what misfortune can drive man to destruction but a woman is the root and branch of it!

SEEMEAH

[*Teasingly.*]
The eyelashes of the songstress from the corner of the veil are more cutting than the edges of the cleaving scimitars; and when they wound the brave are humbled and the corners of their eyes are flooded with tears.

ANTAR

O Abla, in thy bosom are the pomegranates I desire, were even the swords armed with lightning to flash from it.
O Abla, thy face resembles in its luster the dawn, and thy tresses the darkness of night, the complexion of thine adorer.

KING ZOHEIR

May God perpetuate thy glory and happiness and mayst thou ever live in eternal bliss.

May thou live for the Absians for years; may they be exalted in thy name, recorded in prose and verse!
Welcome joy, begone sorrow—O Knight of Knights!
Thou crown of glory!

ANTAR

Hail Zoheir, King of the Absians! I have borne the evils of fortune 'till I have garnered its secret meaning. Languishing in the hospitality of Chosroe's Court is a hoary and venerable Ethiopian monarch. From him I learned that Zebeeba, my mother, stolen and enslaved by the tribe of Jeseela was the daughter of a mighty monarch of Ethiopia. Thy glory is my glory. Thy station, my station.

[*All start in happy surprise—Royal women exclaim as lover takes center stage—Ah, ah, ah—rhythmically.*]

"Antar, Antar of Araby."

CURTAIN

"Oh! Oh! Don't, Racine! I am your sister, your Ti Yette."

# TI YETTE

A Play in One Act

by

John Matheus

Adapted to the capacity of advanced students in high school and college.

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## CHARACTERS

RACINE, *a Creole-quadroon*
TI YETTE, *his sister*
JOSEPH RHUBOTHAM, *a white American lawyer*
POMPEY, *a Negro slave*
POLICEMEN
CARNIVAL, *revelers off stage*

Time—The spring of 1855.
Place—New Orleans.

Permission for the performance of this play must be obtained from the author, John Matheus, West Virginia State College, Institute, West Va.

# TI YETTE

A Play — By John Matheus

## Scene I

*Stage shows the interior of a dining room, built in old Louisiana French style. Bare tile floor, high ceilings, white walls. In the center of the room a rectangular table covered with a red cloth and service for two. High back chairs are at the ends of the table where the service has been set up. In the background, behind the table, facing the audience, a French window, reaching to the floor. The folding wings of the window stand open, giving a view into a luxuriant garden, adorned with a rose bower, japonica bushes and the overhanging branches of a magnolia tree, laden with ivory-petaled blossoms. In front of the window a couch. To the left of the couch on a shelf within easy reach, a row of French books. To right of the window a door leading into the garden. On the right wing a curtained exit leading into the kitchen. On the left another curtained exit leading into* Ti Yette's *bedroom.*

*It is early morning.* Racine *enters from right, dressed in the garb of a wharf worker. He is big-chested, brawny-armed. He carries a pot of steaming coffee in his right hand; in his left a tray of rolls. He walks to the table, sets the pot on a mat, puts the rolls before the place next to the exit that leads to* Ti Yette's *bedroom. He calls.*

RACINE

Ti Yette! [*No answer.*] By the Holy Virgin that girl is sleeping the sleep of the innocent. [*Louder.*] Ti Yette!

TI YETTE

[*Calling from her room.*]
*Mais oui,* in a minute, brother.

RACINE

[*To himself.*]
By the saints, I feel ashamed to call the pretty bird so early in the morning, but this day I have important things to do.

[*A bustle is heard in* TI YETTE'S *bedroom and the sound of a silvery voice, singing a Creole ditty.*]

"Milatraisse courri dans bal
Cocodrie po'té fanal,
Trouloulou!
C'est pas zaffaire à tou?
C'est pas zaffaire à tou,
Trouloulou." *

[*While the singing is heard,* RACINE *walks to the shelf of books and takes down a volume, handling it fondly.*]

* Taken from "On Trail of Negro Folk Songs" by Dorothy Scarborough, page 122, *Harvard University Press.* English version:

"Yellow girl goes to the ball
Darky lights her to the hall,
Fiddler man!
Now, what is that to you?
Say, what is that to you,
Fiddler man?"

RACINE

"La Vie de Toussaint Louverture." [*He sinks down on the couch, meditatively.*] To think what he did—against such odds—drove them out and then let himself be trapped, like a—[*He drops his head into his hands*]—like a nigger. But Dessalines [*He sits erect*] he killed them, killed them every one.

[*He stares wild-eyed into space, as* TI YETTE *trips in from her bedroom, attired in a blue silk dressing gown, bordered with red. Her feet are encased in crimson slippers. Her hair, down, waves in long black ripples. She looks at* RACINE, *shrugs her shoulders with a wry face. He does not notice her. She stops a second, as if afraid, then walking behind him, impulsively flings her arms about his neck.*]

TI YETTE

Racine, my brother, what is the matter? You look so sad, while all the birds are singing, all the *petits oiseaux* in the magnolia trees singing and the sunshine on the roses.

RACINE

Ah, my poor sister! Yes, they sing, they sing because they are free and happy, but I—we—

TI YETTE

I—we—[*mockingly*]—are we not free—we are no slaves—what?

RACINE

Ah, Ti Yette [*bitterly*], you speak like the baby you are. Free? Free? Ha! Ha! [*He laughs derisively.*] When they pass laws that I must have a white guardian to rep-

resent me, speak for me in their courts, when I must not meet together with my fellow citizens, when I dare not assemble with other free men of color upon pain of convict labor! Free? I cannot even walk the streets of New Orleans without my permit. I cannot legally leave this city of my birth to follow the Mississippi to its source without the bond of some white man, of some *sacré Américain* with the blood of his blood upon his hands, or of some gentleman of France, whom I loathe. God, if like Dessalines, I—

TI YETTE

[*Abashed.*]

Come, brother. You think me foolish, a baby, eh? Well, listen to me. What good will all this raving do? Come, drink your coffee. I want to tell you what I have in my baby head.

RACINE

[*Calming himself.*]

You must not worry about such weighty matters, Ti Yette.

TI YETTE

I am no child, Racine. Call me Henriette. I like it better.

RACINE

[*Rising angrily.*]

Henriette! Are you ashamed, too, of your mother's tongue, that you must forsake it for our father's Paris French, or discard it for these pigs' English.

TI YETTE

[*With an effort.*]

Why should you say that? Why, I was just singing:

[*Sings.*]

"Milatraisse courri dans bal,
Cocodrie po'té fanal,
Trouloulou—"

RACINE

[*Making an impatient gesture to stop.*]
Yes—always, even in our own songs, the black man is the "cocodrie," he must carry the lantern. They love our yellow women, and we dare not raise a finger in protest, no not one whisper, and our women are taken in. But *their* women, *their* caged white angels, death angels for every quadroon man, for every octoroon man, who dares flicker an eye in their direction.

TI YETTE

[*Pushing him toward his chair.*]
O Racine! And such a fine spring morning! For Heaven's sake sit down and be quiet. Drink the coffee you have made [*she pats his head*] in order to let your poor Ti Yette sleep a wink longer.

RACINE

[*Fiercely.*]
Yes, I want to keep you beautiful, that you may be the queen of some African king, the wife of some free citizen of San Domingo, of the land of Louverture.

TI YETTE

[*Taking her seat and pouring the coffee. She passes a cup to* RACINE.]
Don't worry so much about me, Racine. I am able to take care of myself in some things.

RACINE

But I must be your father, your mother, as well as your brother.

TI YETTE

[*Seeking to change the subject.*]
To-day after I come from Madame Delphine's I shall cook you some gumbo and a chicken pilau, your favorite dish.

RACINE

[*Not heeding her effort.*]
I will not have you sewing for them.

TI YETTE

But we must live, Racine.

RACINE

Yes—and we must die.

TI YETTE

What do you mean, this speaking in riddles? I don't understand you.

RACINE

[*Rising abruptly*]
I fear for you, Ti Yette. What would become of you if something should happen to me?

TI YETTE

[*In alarm.*]
Has somebody put the evil eye on you?

RACINE

Yes. Fate. Ti Yette, maybe you can understand. I want you to be a lady, a real lady, in a land where black

is right and white is wrong. All day when I am heaving barrels down on the wharves my brain is hot with thinking. I see the yellow water of the river rushing into the Gulf. I watch the big ships. I listen to the waves and I want to be like them, free. I want you to be like them, free.

TI YETTE

I am free, brother. I sing with the birds. I run with the wind. I smell the flowers with the bees. I am free. [*She catches him by the arm.*] Our father was a white man.

RACINE

Damn him! Remember that our mother was a negress!

TI YETTE

She was not. She was a mulattress.

RACINE

The same thing. [*Looking out of the window.*] The sun is mounting. I must hasten to the wharves.

TI YETTE

[*Kissing him.*]
Gumbo and pilau!

RACINE

[*Gazing upon her quizzically.*]
Maybe I'll have something to tell you when I return.

TI YETTE

And maybe I'll have something to tell you.

RACINE

[*Going into the kitchen.*]
Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité!

[*He is seen passing through the garden.* TI YETTE *throws a kiss after his retreating figure. She sings.*]

TI YETTE

"C'est pas zaffaire à tou,
C'est pas zaffaire à tou,
Touloulou!"

[*Suddenly pensive and sitting down on couch.*]
All this palaver about these conjuring Negroes. I hate them all. They are holding me down. I wish I had never been born. One drop of their blood and I must be black forever. [*She rolls up her sleeve.*] This skin is as fair as the whitest woman's and my brother talks of marrying me to an African king. Is he crazy? But how shall I ever tell him? He will kill him. Oh! O dear Christ, O merciful Mary! [*Making the sign of the cross.*] What shall I do?

[*A soft whistle is heard in the garden. A voice calls.*]

VOICE

Ti Yette! Ti Yette! Ti Yette!

TI YETTE

[*Starting in mingled joy and consternation.*]
It is he. [*Going to the window.*] Who calls Ti Yette? [RHUBOTHAM *appears from behind the magnolia tree. He gestures for her to let him in. He is attired in the*

*fashion of the decade before the Civil War, a handsome youth with long hair roached on the side.*] I cannot. Oh! Go. People, they will see you.

RHUBOTHAM

[*Still at the window.*]
I must see you, Ti Yette. Quick. I have something important to tell you.

TI YETTE

Just one little minute, M'sieu. Wait one minute.

[*She rushes into the bedroom.* RHUBOTHAM *opens the door impatiently and strides in imperiously, calling.*]

RHUBOTHAM

I'm in!

TI YETTE

Mon Dieu! A moment I said.

RHUBOTHAM

No primping. I love you better as you are.

TI YETTE

[*Talking from behind the curtain.*]
Why do you come here? My brother might have been with me. He never would have understood.

RHUBOTHAM

[*Looking around the room and spying the bookshelf, stands before it with hands behind his back and attempts to read the titles.*]
Does your brother read these books?

TI YETTE

He does, M'sieu.

[*She appears, wearing coquettishly a flowing white dress. Her hair has been parted in the center, brushed flatly on either side of the temples and coiled in the back after the fashion of the period. She has stuck a red rose in her raven tresses. She is a vision of ravishing beauty.*]

RHUBOTHAM

[*Eying her with rapture.*]

My Henriette. That name sounds more like you are mine. [*He takes down "The Life of Toussaint Louverture," thumbs it, finds a picture of Louverture.*] A nigger general—well! So your brother reads about nigger generals, eh? If he were not your brother, Henriette, I would tell him he was in danger of arrest. Have you told him nothing.

TI YETTE

[*Nervously.*]

Nothing. I—I—just could not tell him this morning.

RHUBOTHAM

Well, I've come to tell you something that he'll be glad to hear, for it will make him, I believe, a white man, or next to one.

TI YETTE

[*Starting back in surprise.*]

A white man?

RHUBOTHAM

And you, my pretty, what you are already, a white woman. I am not a lawyer and the heir to the richest

plantation in the bayou bottoms for nothing. The judge has promised to accept my evidence. He will. His colleagues will concur. The court will declare you white. Your mother will be proved Indian and Spanish. I have forged the papers. Your father was well known, a real Frenchman. So la-la-la! All is lovely.

TI YETTE

You make me afraid. It is too good, M'sieu.

RHUBOTHAM

The decision will be made the day before Mardi Gras.

TI YETTE

Then we'll celebrate at the Quadroon Ball.

RHUBOTHAM

[*Severely.*]
Of course not. You will be a white woman then.

TI YETTE

But it is Carnival. We can masquerade. I'll call it my farewell. [*Clapping her hands in glee.*] Ah, yes. I'll dress as the Queen Marie Antoinette, as she was when a prisoner in her palace. I'll sing to my "bébé," the Dauphin.

RHUBOTHAM

Perhaps, if you believe me now, Henriette, that I love you—my—my ravishing belle.

TI YETTE

[*Curtsying.*]
Mon, M'sieu.

RHUBOTHAM

[*Tries to embrace her.* TI YETTE *flits about the room.*] You are as elusive as a butterfly.

TI YETTE

I am a butterfly, a bee. I like nectar. I will sip the nectar of the rose. I will fly away from my little garden into the big world. [RHUBOTHAM *catches her and embraces her warmly.*] Send your servant here to ask my brother to come to the Quadroon Ball. He can be invited to play his fiddle. I am afraid to ask him. He will not listen to me. He will call me a baby.

RHUBOTHAM

If that is what you want, I will do it. But do not worry about your brother. Of course, he cannot associate with us, but I have money.

TI YETTE

And my brother, I must see him, sometime, yes?

RHUBOTHAM

[*Laughing.*]
Of course. He will be a white man too, but not in New Orleans. [*He kisses her again and hurries away.* TI YETTE *watches his figure until it disappears in the distance. Then she falls on the couch, sobbing.*] A white woman! I shall be a white woman!

## SCENE II

*Evening of the same day. The table is set for the evening meal. Twilight is passing into night. Candles are burning in the candlesticks.* TI YETTE, *wearing*

*the gay colors of the Creole, walks back and forth from the kitchen into the dining room, putting dishes and food on the table. She sings.*

TI YETTE

"Fais do, do Minette,
Chère petit cochon au lait,
Fais do, do mo chère petit."*

[*As she sings,* RACINE *appears at the window, dirty and tired. He stops to listen to his sister's singing, then enters.*]

RACINE

Ti Yette.

TI YETTE

[*Turning quickly.*]
Racine! Gumbo and pilau ready.

RACINE

You carried me back, sister, to long passed days. How many times have I heard our mother crooning that lullaby. Your voice is like our mother's, Ti Yette.

TI YETTE

[*With apprehension.*]
Do you think I am like my mother? But hurry, get washed. You must eat your gumbo while it is hot.

RACINE

I am too weary and harassed to eat. Yet one must eat to live, even though the living isn't worth it.

* Page 155 of "On Trail of Negro Folk songs."

TI YETTE

But it is worth it.

[RACINE *goes into the kitchen. The sound of water splashing is heard.* TI YETTE *arranges the table, humming the lullaby, as she works.* RACINE *re-enters in deep meditation. He sits at the table.* TI YETTE *follows. The conversation proceeds as they eat.*]

RACINE

I have done great things to-day, Ti Yette.

TI YETTE

And so have I.

RACINE

But what I have accomplished is of great import to us.

TI YETTE

[*Hesitatingly.*]
And so are mine.

RACINE

Tell me what you have done, sister.

TI YETTE

No. You must begin.

RACINE

[*Seriously.*]
This is a grave business, Ti Yette, an affair of life and death. Can you keep a secret?

TI YETTE

[*Nervously.*]
Of course.

RACINE

Then listen. I have hinted from time to time how I have chafed and pined under the abomination of the hell in which we are living. Every day I have squirmed, like a worm, under the heel of oppression. But the worm has turned. [TI YETTE's *eyes grow wide with astonishment.*] On next Tuesday, Mardi Gras, we will make our escape. [TI YETTE *starts.*] The Carnival is in our favor. We will disguise ourselves in the protection of the masquerade, make our way to the wharf and board a Haitian boat bound for Port-au-Prince. I have everything arranged. In that land of Freedom, wrested by black hands from white, you will not be quadroon, nor negress. You will be first of all a woman. The world will be ours. We will help vindicate Haiti against almighty odds. We shall be free. I will strike the blow.

TI YETTE

[*Dumbfounded.*]
Leave New Orleans, leave the city of our birth, our garden?

RACINE

I hate them.

TI YETTE

We have committed no crime to exile ourselves.

RACINE

We have committed a foul and unpardonable crime, the crime of being born with Negro blood.

TI YETTE

[*Endeavoring to restrain her feelings.*]
On Mardi Gras—so soon—must it be so soon, Racine?

RACINE

The sooner the better.

TI YETTE

How do you know we are going to like it?

RACINE

What, woman, have you no pride? Have you no love for your race, no scorn in your soul for these God-Almighty overlords who crush us into the dust?

TI YETTE

[*Rises from the table and falls on her knees by* RACINE'S *chair.*]

O brother, you do not know what you are doing. Wait. I have something to tell you. Something.

RACINE

[*In stern tones.*]

What? Out with it.

TI YETTE

It is—it is [*weeping*]—I am no negress. I cannot help it. My white forbears have given me that inheritance. And these slaves, that crawl in the dust, I am not one of them.

RACINE

[*Interrupting.*]

Nor am I. You voice the very reason why I am leaving.

TI YETTE

But wait. You do not understand. I not only am not of their condition, but I loathe their race. I hate them. They have put a curse upon me.

[*Sobbing.*]

RACINE

[*Pushing her brusquely aside.*]
What do you say, girl? What do you mean? You hate your mother's blood, your brother's blood, your own blood! It is not the African lineage that stains! It is this avaricious, lustful Caucasian heritage that is our curse! Their civilization has damned us! Their religion mocks us!

TI YETTE

You blaspheme. O Holy Mother, forgive him. Some great misfortune will surely overtake us. Forgive him.

RACINE

Call on your saints and your Holy Mother. What do they care about nigger slaves? Will they better the lot of the free man of color? Call on them to strike these masters dead. They flourish the more. Dessalines knew no God, but Vengeance. His religion was Might. He won. Look at these moaning, moon-struck fools, crying in the night to their God. Perhaps He is away, or peradventure sleepeth.

TI YETTE

Am I responsible for my body's color, my mind's equipment, the heritage of my father's people?

RACINE

[*Shaking her in wrath.*]
But you will go—you will go, whether you like them or not. I am your mother and your brother. The Creole girl must bow before parental will. She does not know what is best for her. You have never tasted freedom and you do not know what it means. You have never drunk

the gall and wormwood of humiliation. You have never been mauled and kicked by white men. You have never seen, nor felt, nor heard what I have gone through. I have protected you. I will take you from this hell, where you can find riches and happiness and a husband worthy of you.

TI YETTE

[*Echoing.*]
Riches, happiness and a husband worthy of—of me?

[*A knock is heard at the dining-room door.* TI YETTE *jumps to her feet, trembling.* RACINE *strides to the door and flings it open.*]

RACINE

Hello, Pompey.

POMPEY

Massa Rhubotham done sont me heah to ask yo' tuh fiddle fuh de ball on a Choosday night come.

RACINE

[*Clouding angrily.*]
What ball?

POMPEY

[*Looking significantly at* TI YETTE.]
De yallar women's ball.

RACINE

[*Curtly.*]
Tell him I'll be busy.

POMPEY

[*In astonishment.*]
You ain't gwine?

RACINE

Tell him what I said.

POMPEY

[*Maliciously.*]
Good eben', mam'selle Ti Yette. [*Exit.*]

RACINE

Damn scoundrel, wanting me to play at the Quadroon Ball, while he dances with our beauties. Me play while he dances; he dance and I play, and if I step a foot on the floor, a bowie knife between my ribs. I'll see him dead first—and—I will be busy.

TI YETTE

[*Wiping her eyes.*]
Your supper is cold.

RACINE

[*Fiercely.*]
I do not want any supper. Why should I? How can I eat, when my own sister bites me with their mortal poison?

## Scene III

*The night of Mardi Gras, a week later. Candles are burning on the table of the same room. The muffled sound of Carnival revelry can be heard from the street outside—shouts of laughter and merrymaking, tooting of horns, ringing of bells.* Ti Yette *is heard in her room singing the Creole lullaby:*

"Fais do, do Minette,
Chère petit cochon au lait,
Fait do, do mo chère petit."

*She emerges slowly from behind the curtain to her bedroom, wearing the masquerade of Marie Antoinette. She carries a crucifix and a large doll. A black mask is over her face. She mincingly tips to the garden window. The moon shines upon the flowers and the magnolias. She kneels and prays.*

TI YETTE

O, Holy Mother, aid thy servant this night, this night.

[*She rises hurriedly.* RACINE *enters, disguised as* PIERROT. *He too wears a black mask.* TI YETTE *nervously fingers the crucifix.*]

RACINE

Are you ready? Look for the last time upon this cursed land. Freedom lies over the waters in the islands of the Caribbean.

TI YETTE

[*Beseechingly.*]

Brother, dear brother, just this one favor. Let me peep in at the Quadroon Ball. Take me by to glimpse that gorgeous spectacle, that I may carry it always in my memory when I shall be far away.

RACINE

No, no, no! Would you jeopardize your chance for flight and compromise my fortune and my life?

TI YETTE

Is it so bad?

RACINE

Yes. You are ignorant of the truth. You do not know what was passed last night in the legislature, a bill to

confiscate the property and liberty of any free man of color, seeking to leave the port of New Orleans. They need our muscles in the coming sugar and cotton crop. We must register. And the author of this bill is—

[*He pauses.*]

TI YETTE

Who?

RACINE

Is—is the scoundrel who sent his slave to ask me to play at the Quadroon Ball, Joseph Rhubotham.

TI YETTE

[*Swaying, catching at the chair for support.*]
Joseph Rhubotham?

RACINE

[*In high scorn.*]
And you want to go by the Quadroon Ball. Ti Yette has become her brother's enemy, Ti Yette has forgotten her mother's people—Ti Yette—

TI YETTE

My God! Don't reproach me more. I will not go to the ball. But take me away quick—let us leave—now—this minute.

RACINE

Enough. [*The sound of the revelry grows louder.*] Let us be on our way.

[*He is adjusting his mask, when a knocking comes on the garden door.*]

TI YETTE

Let me hide.

[*She makes a start to run, when* RHUBOTHAM *enters,*

*a bit intoxicated, masked, masquerading as a pirate.*]

RACINE

Who are you? What do you want here?

RHUBOTHAM

That's all right who I am. I am your friend.

RACINE

I have no time for parley. What is your business?

RHUBOTHAM

The devil! You are a gentleman of sharp tongue and sparse words. [TI YETTE *again moves toward her room.*] Henriette, you are late. I have come for you, the girl who is to be my wife.

RACINE

[*Turning to* TI YETTE.]
What—what is this?

TI YETTE

[*Trembling.*]
I have been trying to tell you. I was to meet him to-night at the Quadroon Ball. I did not know he was coming here.

RHUBOTHAM

He knows nothing?

[TI YETTE *shakes her head in sign of negative.*]

RACINE

[*His voice coming in gasps.*]
What man is this taking such liberties with my sister?

RHUBOTHAM

I take no liberties. She gives me the privilege. I am your friend, I say.

RACINE

My friend? Enough of this riddle! Speak out in plain words.

TI YETTE

Tell him.

RHUBOTHAM

I am a gentleman, an honorable man. Proof. I love Henriette, and I have made her white this day.

RACINE

Is this fool a lunatic?

RHUBOTHAM

Not so fast. Read this.

[*He gives him a copy of a New Orleans newspaper.*]

RACINE

[*Goes to the light of the candles and reads.*]

"The Supreme Court of Louisiana decided to-day that Miss Henriette Bourdon be granted the appeal made in her behalf. Evidence sufficient was presented to the Court to convince it of the great wrong that has been perpetrated upon this young woman. Through a mistake in birth certificates Miss Bourdon has been classified as colored. Her ancestors have been proved free from blemish of Negro blood. She therefore is justly declared white." [*Throws the paper on the floor, spits on it, stamps it. He then goes to* RHUBOTHAM *and tears off his mask. He turns to* TI YETTE, *speaking in a choked, hoarse voice.*] God! A white man! Ti Yette, tell me

who this man is. Have you connived with him to traduce your ancestry by this polluted lie?

RHUBOTHAM

[*Angrily.*]
I am Joseph Rhubotham, a white man. Remember that, you fool. I have done you a favor. I have declared myself for your sister, all but compromised myself, because I want to do the right thing by her. I love her. I want her to be my wife. But you are too dark. People will talk. I could not include you, but you can go away where no one knows you. I will pay you. I am wealthy. Bring me pen and paper.

RACINE

[*Slaps his face.*]
You think you can buy *me?* You believe you do me honor? I, proud descendant of Africa, I spit at you. [RHUBOTHAM *flashes a bowie knife.* RACINE *with a sudden quick movement strikes the arm holding the knife so that* RHUBOTHAM *lets it fall to the floor. Quick as a flash the agile* RACINE *grabs it.* TI YETTE *screams.*] Before I kill you, white man, you will hear my tale of grievances. Why is it that you and your tribe come stealing our sisters and even our wives?

RHUBOTHAM

I have done what no white man in New Orleans would have done—proposed to marry your sister.

RACINE

[*Pleading.*]
Are you willing, Ti Yette, to marry the betrayer of your people, the seducer of their liberty? Are you willing?

TI YETTE

I have no people! I love him!

RACINE

White man, let me marry your sister, let me make love to your women and I may believe you.

RHUBOTHAM

[*Tradition and consciousness of his social superiority asserting themselves.*]

You dirty nigger.

RACINE

I am wholly convinced of your damnable hypocrisy!

RHUBOTHAM

[*To* Ti Yette.]

I have come for you and the fool who thinks he is your brother—[*to* Racine]—the Court has evidence that you are not her brother.

RACINE

You lie!

TI YETTE

I did not tell him to do this, Racine! I swear I know nothing of it!

RACINE

Be still!

RHUBOTHAM

It is done.

[*He grapples with* Racine. *They struggle.* Ti Yette *screams,* "Murder! Help!" *Outside the noise of the Carnival merry-makers drown her cries.* Ra-

CINE, *who loses his mask in the struggle, trips his opponent.* RHUBOTHAM *falls prostrate.* RACINE *turns to* TI YETTE.]

RACINE

[*To* TI YETTE.]
You in love with your—with my arch enemy. You in love with a white man, you, for whom I was giving my life blood to save from perdition! You have forgotten the cries of our people, night and day!

[TI YETTE *shrinks back in terror.*]

TI YETTE

Oh! Oh! Don't, Racine. Racine! I am your sister, your Ti Yette.

RACINE

[*In a frenzy.*]
You lie! You want to be white! You have plotted to be white! You have thwarted me, baffled me, but [RHUBOTHAM *staggers slowly to his feet*] I am of the race of Dessalines. You shall see that the will of the black man is mightier than the white. [*He stabs* TI YETTE, *who falls, screaming. The knife drops slowly from the fratricide's nerveless hand.* RHUBOTHAM *is dumb with horror.* RACINE *kneels beside* TI YETTE. *He picks her up in his arms and carries her to the couch by the window. The moon still shines upon the magnolia and casts a wan shadow over* TI YETTE'S *masked face. Great noise outside. Silence.*]

TI YETTE

The . . . ship . . . be . . . gone.

[*She begins to sing, at first clearly, then lower and*

*lower until at the last note she breaks and falls limp in death in* RACINE'S *arms.*]

"Fais—do—do Minette,
Chère—pe—tit—cochon—au—lait,
Fais—do—do—mo—chère—pe—tit—"

RHUBOTHAM

[*Stealthily.*]
The police! The police!
[*Flees.*]

RACINE

The ship! No. There is no reason for going now.
[*He slowly removes the mask from the dead face of his sister, folds her arms and bends tenderly over her. A knock resounds, louder than was the confusion of the carnival.*]

POLICE

[*In concert.*]
Open, open, in the name of the law.

RACINE

[*Falling beside the body in agonizing sobs.*]
Ti Yette! Ti Yette! Ti Yette!

CURTAIN

The Graven Image

# GRAVEN IMAGES

A Play

by

May Miller

Adapted to the capacity of children of the eighth grade.

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"And Miriam and Aaron spake against Moses because of the Ethiopian woman he had married."
NUMBERS 12:1

## PERSONS OF THE PLAY

MOSES
AARON, *the brother of Moses*
MIRIAM, *the sister of Moses*
ZIPPORAH, *the wife of Moses*
JETHRO, *the father-in-law of Moses*
ITHAMAR, *youngest son of Aaron*
ELIEZER, *the second son of Moses*
Playmates of Ithamar
Attendants and Maidens Bearing Incense, Ointment, Candlesticks and the Holy Vessels into the Tabernacle.

TIME—1490 B.C.
PLACE—Hazeroth, Egypt.
SCENE—The arena before the tabernacle.

Permission for the performance of this play must be obtained from the author, May Miller, 2225 4th St., N. W., Washington, D. C.

# GRAVEN IMAGES

A Play — By May Miller

## Scene

*The arena before the tabernacle. Back stage a flight of steps leads to the tabernacle. On both sides of the steps the columns rise. At the base of the columns basins of incense are burning. To the left front stage an abandoned idol is half hidden by a tree. To the right a few trees are left standing and a stump shows plainly that the temple has been erected in a clearing. It is high noon. The scene is enveloped in a bright golden light.*

[Ithamar, *a stout lad of twelve clad in a short tunic, runs hurriedly on the stage. He looks toward the tabernacle and then slowly around him. He spies the golden bull.*]

ITHAMAR

Oh! Oh! Uh-huh! Uh-huh!

[*He smiles in satisfaction at having discovered the idol. He cautiously runs toward the tabernacle and up the steps. He peers in and listens. Nodding, he runs down the steps and to the side stage.*]

Lo, lads! Lo, lads!

[*A troupe of boys of about* Ithamar's *age run boisterously in.*]

FIRST BOY

What is it, Ithamar?

ITHAMAR

They took it away and we knew not where they hid it, but I have found it. Here it is.

SECOND BOY

[*In amazement.*]
The golden bull that our sires cast out of the tabernacle!

FIRST BOY

The golden bull!

BOYS

[*In chorus.*]
The golden bull!

FIRST BOY

What fun!

SECOND BOY

Now that we have found it, what shall we do?

FIRST BOY

It shall be a target, of course, and we shall hurl stones. A prize to the one who hits the bull's eye!

BOYS

[*In a chorus, as they rush to pick up stones.*]
The bull's eye! The bull's eye!
[*Amid much confusion they start hurling stones.*]

ITHAMAR

Stay! Stay! [*The noise subsides.*] We shall try by turn.

SECOND BOY

If our elders come, they will punish us by turn, too, for it is said they wish to keep the bull unscarred.

ITHAMAR

But our elders will not come here. The tabernacle is empty.

SECOND BOY

The noise might lead them here.

ITHAMAR

Then we can't play target.

BOYS

[*Throwing down their stones.*]
Bah!

FIRST BOY

Come, Ithamar, what can we play?

ITHAMAR

We could play worship.

FIRST BOY

Maybe, but it is not so pleasant as stoning.

ITHAMAR

We can bow down before the bull even as our sires did before they built the tabernacle to God Jehovah.

SECOND BOY

But our sires will punish us for that, too.

ITHAMAR

We shall be quiet and our sires will not know.

SECOND BOY

Some one might tell.

ITHAMAR

You are the only some one I know, coward.

FIRST BOY

Come, Ithamar, let the scared one alone. Let us start the worship.

ITHAMAR

Who will begin?

FIRST BOY

You, Ithamar, you shall start the worship. Every one will follow you in turn. Come, make high praise to the golden bull!

[*The boys form a circle around the golden bull.*]

BOYS

[*In chorus.*]

Ithamar! Ithamar!

ITHAMAR

[*Stepping forward and kneeling before the bull.*]

O! most sacred bull, it is Ithamar, the son of Aaron, the first high priest of Israel, who kneels before you. He offers you this golden armlet worth two shekels of silver. Be kind to me and my playmates.

[*He places the armlet on the bull's ears.*]

BOYS

[*Clapping their hands and shouting lustily.*]

Well done, Ithamar! Well done! Next! Next!

ITHAMAR

[*Grasping the first boy.*]
You go next.

BOYS

[*Lustily.*]
Talba next! Talba!

FIRST BOY

[*Stepping forward and kneeling.*]
O! most sacred bull, I, Talba, am only a poor lad. My father is no high priest of Israel and I have no armlet to offer. This ragged girdle is all I have, but you may have it.

[*He hangs the girdle from his tunic over the back of the bull.*]

BOYS

[*Clapping and shouting lustily.*]
Next! Next!

ITHAMAR

[*Approaching the second boy.*]
Scared one, you shall make worship next, for then we shall know you will not tell.

SECOND BOY

But I know not what to say and I have nothing to offer.

FIRST BOY

I had nothing.

SECOND BOY

I have not even a ragged girdle.

ITHAMAR

Come, you can not escape so easily.

BOYS

[*Pressing closer and pushing their frightened comrade forward.*]

No, come! Come!

SECOND BOY

How shall I begin?

FIRST BOY

Begin as I began—O most sacred bull!

BOYS

[*Echoing.*]

O most sacred bull!

SECOND BOY

[*Timidly kneeling before the idol.*]

O most sacred bull, I have nothing to give you—not even a girdle like Talba's. But, sacred bull, if you will promise not to hurt me, I shall let Ithamar chop off a curl and give it to you for your bald head.

FIRST BOY

Bravo! come, Ithamar, chop off the curl.

ITHAMAR

A golden curl for a golden bull!

[ITHAMAR *picks up a sharp stone and the boys grasp the timid child and lay his head on a stump for* ITHAMAR *to chop off a curl. The child struggles.*]

FIRST BOY

Keep still; he does not want your head, fool.

SECOND BOY

[*Struggling.*]

Pray let me up. There's a curl at home I'd rather give, and it will not hurt so much.

BOYS

No, no, a golden curl for a golden bull!

[*While the boys have been busily engaged a group of little girls has entered.*]

FIRST GIRL

Pray, don't cut off his curl if it hurts so badly. Take one of mine; I have so many more.

FIRST BOY

You are a girl, you would cry.

FIRST GIRL

Indeed, I would not.

[ITHAMAR, *looking up, stops the cutting of hair. The second boy, thus released, retreats to the edge of the crowd where he may escape readily.*]

ITHAMAR

Besides, the golden bull does not want a girl's curl.

BOYS

[*In chorus.*]

A girl's curl! Bah!

SECOND GIRL

If you will not take the curl, may we play?

ITHAMAR

We are worshiping the golden bull and he does not like girl children.

SECOND GIRL

Let him close his eyes; he will not know the difference.

ITHAMAR

Oh, no, no, that would never do. We must not deceive when we worship.

FIRST GIRL

Then you cannot let us play?

ITHAMAR

Let me see, what are little girls good for?

[*The boys look doubtfully at the girls.*]

FIRST BOY

Ithamar, I will tell you—let them dance their worship as the virgins of our sires.

ITHAMAR

Maybe the golden bull would not mind that, but I am sure he does not want women to speak.

FIRST BOY

All right, little girls, we may let you dance.

BOYS

[*In chorus.*]

Yes, yes, a dance!

FIRST GIRL

And will you, at the end of the dance, bow when we bow? Then we shall all worship together.

ITHAMAR

But remember you must bow lower than we, for you are girls.

GIRLS

[*Eagerly.*]
All right.

ITHAMAR

On with the dance, then.

FIRST BOY

[*Pushing the boys back.*]
The dance!

BOYS

The dance! The dance!

[*The girls dance and at the end prostrate themselves before the golden bull. The boys follow their example, kneeling before the idol. While the dance has been going on a little brown boy of about ten years has quietly entered. Unobserved he has watched and as they bow he bursts into loud laughter.*]

ELIEZER

Ha! Ha! So in Hazeroth little boys and girls dance and worship idols while their parents worship Jehovah.

FIRST BOY

Well, who are you to laugh and whence do you come?

ELIEZER

I am Eliezer, but recently come from the household of Jethro, my grandsire, in the land of Midian.

ITHAMAR

Oh, so you are my cousin of whom my sire, Father Aaron, spoke.

ELIEZER

[*Nodding anxiously.*]
Uh—huh.

ITHAMAR

I am Ithamar, your cousin, son of Aaron, your uncle; and these, my friends and playmates. Welcome!

ELIEZER

[*Bowing.*]
I give thanks to you for the welcome.

FIRST BOY

You may join us, if it pleases you.

ELIEZER

But it pleases me not. In Midian we are never permitted to play with idols.

ITHAMAR

You mean that you do not want to worship our idol.

FIRST GIRL

Do not ask him again, Ithamar; we do not like foreign boys.

SECOND GIRL

And I know not why, but the sight of him is strange.

FIRST GIRL

He is Ithamar's cousin.

SECOND GIRL

But they are so different.

ITHAMAR

[*Boastfully.*]
I am not a coward.

ELIEZER

Neither am I.

ITHAMAR

[*Pushing* ELIEZER *toward second boy.*]
You two scared ones play together. Come, boys, back to our sport and leave them.

ELIEZER

Yes, and when our elders come, they shall be punished for their sport.

SECOND BOY

[*In fear.*]
Our elders are coming here?

ELIEZER

Of course, our elders are coming. Moses is already gathering the worshipers that Jethro may carry back to Midian news of the great tabernacle.

FIRST BOY

[*Overhearing.*]
What do you know of our great Moses?

ELIEZER

Your Moses, indeed! My Moses! Did you not know that I am the son of Moses and Zipporah?

FIRST BOY

Bah! Bah! and who believes that?

SECOND BOY

Are you truly the son of Moses?

BOYS

Bah! Bah!

ELIEZER

Tell them, Ithamar, am I not?

ITHAMAR

Yes, he is; but my Aunt Miriam says that his mother is a black woman and that he and his brother, Gershom, are no true children of Israel.

SECOND GIRL

I knew the sight of him was strange.

ELIEZER

Yes, and I overheard my elders say that your two brothers, Nadab and Alihu, were struck dead for offering strange fire to God.

BOYS

[*Shrinking from* ITHAMAR.]
Oh! Oh!

ITHAMAR

Yes, but they are dead and you are living and I shall not play with you. The others may do as they please.

FIRST BOY

[*To* ELIEZER.]
Can you show any reason why we should play with you, son of a black woman?

SECOND BOY

But he isn't black; he's only golden.

FIRST BOY

And pray, what does he know that we should play with him?

SECOND BOY

He knows more than Ithamar. He knew our sires were coming and Ithamar did not.

FIRST BOY

[*To* ELIEZER.]
If we do play with you, what sport can you offer?

ELIEZER

We can still play worship.

SECOND BOY

How can we play worship without an idol?

ELIEZER

I shall be your idol.

ITHAMAR

Bah! such an idol!

ELIEZER

Indeed, and why not? I shall make a far better idol than this. [*He springs lightly to the platform in front of the idol.*] Look, this idol is gold. [*He strips his tunic off*

*to the waist.*] Am I not gold? [*The boys press forward murmuring their assent.*] Come feel your idol. It is cold but I am warm. Warm gold. [*The boys press closer.*]. And see! see! You worship this thing that does not so much as nod his thanks. It's still, but I move, I move.

SECOND BOY

He might make a very good idol.

FIRST BOY

We shall not listen to Ithamar. He is a better idol—warm, moving gold.

BOYS

Aye! Aye!

SECOND BOY

Well, let's begin playing before our sires come.

FIRST BOY

Come, boys!

[*Boys surround* ELIEZER, *crying their assent.*]

FIRST GIRL

And you will let us play, too?

ELIEZER

Yes, you may worship me, too.

SECOND BOY

When our sires come and ask, "What worship you?" . . .

FIRST GIRL

We shall answer, "A little boy."

FIRST BOY

No, silly, we shall say, "Great sires, we worship a child whom God hath created in his own image." Then, our sires will be pleased and they will reply, "Verily, verily, peace be with ye," and pass into the tabernacle.

ITHAMAR

[*Going off stage.*]
They will, indeed, eh? We shall see.

FIRST BOY

Pay no attention to him. Come, let's play.

ELIEZER

Let the girls dance again for me.

[*The girls have just formed a circle and are about to dance when a solemn chant is heard in the distance. The girls stop.*]

FIRST BOY

Our sires are coming to the tabernacle.

SECOND BOY

I knew it; and now we can't play.

[*The strains of the chant grow louder as the procession files in. The prophets lead the line.* MOSES *and* JETHRO *are ahead of all others. As* MOSES *enters the children bow their heads.*]

CHILDREN

Father Moses!

MOSES

Peace be with ye!

[*The worshipers enter the tabernacle and a long*

*line of youths and maidens bearing incense, candlesticks and sacred vessels follows. When the last worshiper has entered, the chant dies away to an echo. The children who had joined the chant now return to their sport. Miriam, a plump handsome woman of forty, is led on the stage by* ITHAMAR.]

ITHAMAR

Now, you see, Aunt Miriam, that which I told you is true. He makes himself an idol and the children worship him.

MIRIAM

No, no, this must not be. [*To the children.*] What is this that you do, little ones?

[*The children fall back in consternation.*]

FIRST GIRL

We worship a child whom God hath created in his own image.

MIRIAM

In his own image, indeed! Pray did Father Moses tell you God was an Ethiop?

CHILDREN

No, no.

MIRIAM

This child is no image of God. Jehovah. He is black like his mother.

CHILDREN

[*Retreating from* ELIEZER.]

Oh! Oh!

SECOND GIRL

[*To first girl.*]
I told you the sight of him was strange.

MIRIAM

[*Grasping* ELIEZER *and dragging him from platform.*]
Black one, you had best hide your shame from the followers of your father and not place your complexion where all may see. [*To the children.*] Now away with you! No more foolish sport of this kind; mind you.

SECOND BOY

I knew our elders would scold.

ITHAMAR

[*To the children as they go off stage.*]
I told you not to listen to him, didn't I?

[ELIEZER *sobbing has retreated to the back of the platform behind the golden bull where he hides from dreaded blows from* MIRIAM. *A faint refrain of the chant is heard in the tabernacle.* MIRIAM *approaches and listens. She starts up the steps, then as if changing her mind, turns and starts off stage.* AARON *comes out of the tabernacle and stands at the top of the steps.*]

AARON

Why do you delay? The worship has started and the maidens eagerly await you.

MIRIAM

Why do they await me? Surely the black Jethro has seen our great tabernacle 'ere this.

AARON

Yes, but they now patiently await the word of God concerning our going from Hazeroth. You must lead the worship of the maidens.

MIRIAM

I shall be with them. I delayed only to stop the children's foolish sport.

AARON

What sport?

MIRIAM

Eliezer, the young son of Moses, has been making of himself an idol.

AARON

And what matters that?

MIRIAM

Only it is not wise that the followers of Moses should be constantly reminded of his black wife and brown children.

AARON

And if they are, what?

MIRIAM

Surely they will say, "He is no true prophet of the God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob, for he has married an Ethiop and his children are Ethiopian."—However, that may end happily, for the people may call for a new leader.

AARON

Sh! God will punish you for such talk.

MIRIAM

God may punish me, but the people will select a new leader.

AARON

Who will that be?

MIRIAM

You, of course. Are you not the first high priest of the children of Israel?

AARON

Oh, no, that could not be!

MIRIAM

Why not? Has the Lord spoken only to Moses? Has he not spoken to us also? Why should we, who are also the children of Amram, the Levite, follow that son who has forgotten so far as to marry an Ethiop?

AARON

That which you speak is sinful. 'Tis God's will that Moses lead us and God Jehovah will punish you for speaking against him and me for listening.

MIRIAM

Coward! What I have said is sweet to your ears, too. [*Going up the tabernacle steps.*] What you fear to say your sister, Miriam, dares!

AARON

I fear only God.

MIRIAM

Has God said that only Moses knows His will?

AARON

So Moses has said.

MIRIAM

Why should Moses not speak thus, as long as by so speaking he assures for himself the place of leader? And we cringe and follow.

AARON

But who am I to lead Israel?

MIRIAM

You are the first born of Amram and by far more ready of tongue than the brother you now follow.

AARON

But that brother is the chosen leader of Israel.

MIRIAM

He should lead Israel who is truly an Israelite, one uncontaminated by Ethiopian blood.

AARON

O! to lead my people.

MIRIAM

You can.

AARON

[*As if dreaming.*]

And we should go out from Hazeroth and pitch tents in the wilderness and the people would cry out, "O! Father Aaron, where does Israel move now?" They would look to me for answer.

MIRIAM

They would harken to your word and with one voice call, "Father Aaron! Father Aaron, the true leader of Israel! Moses is no more."

ELIEZER

[*Jumping hastily from the platform and coming forth to face* MIRIAM.]

You lie, you lie. My sire, Moses, lives. He is in the tabernacle praying for us.

MIRIAM

[*Grasping* ELIEZER]

So you are eavesdropper, too, listening to words intended for other ears. [*She slaps his face.*] Eavesdroppers are always thus rewarded for their pains.

AARON

[*Freeing the child from* MIRIAM'S *grasp.*]

He is only a child, Miriam.

MIRIAM

Yes, child of an Ethiop!

AARON

God shall surely punish you.

MIRIAM

Indeed!

[*She turns and laughs, then starts toward the tabernacle.*]

AARON

[*Grasping* MIRIAM'S *arm.*]
Hold! where do you go?

MIRIAM

Into the tabernacle to speak against Moses, our brother. The evil is done. The child has heard; he will prate to his elders.

AARON

Hold! Hold!

MIRIAM

[*Freeing her arm and grasping his.*]
Come, your sister, Miriam, dares.

AARON

And may the God of our fathers have mercy upon us!

[MIRIAM *enters the tabernacle and* AARON *reluctantly follows. The second boy peeps slyly on the stage. Discovering* ELIEZER *hidden behind the idol, he approaches.*]

SECOND BOY

Have our elders truly gone?

ELIEZER

Yes, every one.

SECOND BOY

And are you sure the wicked Miriam will not return?

ELIEZER

She will not return soon. I heard Aaron, my uncle, tell Miriam that they were awaiting God's word of our going out from Hazeroth.

SECOND BOY

Is Miriam really your aunt?

ELIEZER

Yes, the sister of my father, Moses. Why?

SECOND BOY

She doesn't like you much; does she?

ELIEZER

I guess she does love Ithamar more; but you do not believe that which she said—do you?

SECOND BOY

What—what did she say?

ELIEZER

You remember well that she said I was not made in the image of God.

SECOND BOY

Well, are you?

ELIEZER

Of course, and God will punish any one who says I am not.

SECOND BOY

And how do you know that?

ELIEZER

Aaron, the brother of my sire, said so. He told Miriam so, too.

SECOND BOY

And what did she say?

ELIEZER

She didn't believe it, for she laughed and went into the tabernacle.

SECOND BOY

I laugh, too, for I don't believe that you are either.

[*As the children talk, a great uproar is heard in the tabernacle. The crowd surges to the door and down the steps with* MIRIAM *running ahead. The children hide behind the idol.*]

WORSHIPERS

Unclean! Unclean!

[MIRIAM *runs down the steps and collapses at the foot.* AARON *starts to lift her but looks in her face and draws back in fear.*]

Unclean! Unclean!

AARON

O! God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob, have mercy on her and forgive me, a sinner who spoke against thy servant.

[MOSES *stands in the doorway of the tabernacle; and* MIRIAM, *looking up, sees him.*]

MIRIAM

[*Stretching her hands to* MOSES.]

Oh, my brother, Moses, I have sinned against God and you, but I beseech you to pray God to take away this leprosy. See, my arms are as white as snow. My flesh is half consumed. Let me not be as one dead.

WORSHIPERS

Unclean! Unclean!

[MOSES *lifts his arms in prayer and silence falls.*]

MOSES

God of my father, and of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, heal her now, O God, I beseech thee!

MIRIAM

[*Looking hopefully to* MOSES *and at her arms.*]
Am I healed now?

MOSES

[*Shaking his head.*]
No, my sister.

MIRIAM

Shall I be condemned to live on dead as I am?

MOSES

For seven days thou shalt be ashamed and for seven days must thou be shut out from camp. 'Tis God's will.

WORSHIPERS

[*Repeating in awe.*]
God's will.

[MIRIAM *rises and staggers off stage, the mob following at a distance shouting "Unclean."*]

MOSES

[*Stretching forth his hands.*]
Verily, verily, I say unto ye, my people, let not the camp be moved until she return to us after seven days. Then shall we journey and pitch camp in the wilderness of Param. Peace be with ye!

[*The psalm singers issue from the tabernacle and follow* Moses, *chanting. When the last singer has gone, the boys come from behind the idol.*]

ELIEZER

So you laughed with Miriam, did you? Maybe you want to go with her into the wilderness.

SECOND BOY

Oh! no, truly not. I will play worship again, truly I will, if you ask your God not to punish me.

ELIEZER

Will you bring back your play-fellows?

SECOND BOY

Yes, yes, and you shall be our idol.

ELIEZER

And when our elders come, what will you say?

SECOND BOY

When my elders come and ask, "What is this that you do, little one?" I shall answer. . . .

ELIEZER

[*Impatiently.*]
Yes! Yes!

SECOND BOY

I shall answer, "I worship a child."

ELIEZER

[*Prompting.*]
Whom God hath created. . . .

SECOND BOY

Yes, I know. Let me say all of it. I worship a child whom God hath created in his own image. Now, will you ask your God to forgive me?

ELIEZER

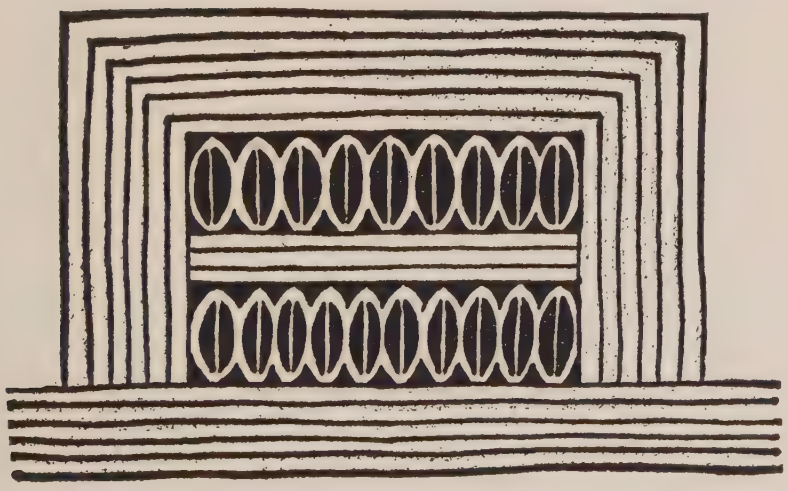
All right, but be gone and call your play-fellows.

SECOND BOY

[*Going off stage.*]
Lo, lads! Lo, lads!

[ELIEZER *springs to the platform and sits hugging his knees in delight in anticipation of the coming sport as the curtain falls.*]

CURTAIN



You sang not deeds of heroes or of kings;
No chant of bloody war, no exulting pæan
Of arms—won triumphs; but your humble strings
You touched in chord with music empyrean.

—*Johnson*

# RIDING THE GOAT

A One-Act Play

by

May Miller

Adapted to the capacity of advanced students in high school and college.

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## PERSONS OF THE PLAY

William Carter, *a young physician*
Ruth Chapman
Ant Hetty, *Ruth's grandmother*
Christopher Columbus Jones, *the lodge inspector*

Scene—The sitting-room of Ant Hetty's home. The action takes place in South Baltimore in a community of draymen.

Time—Six o'clock of a June evening in the early part of the twentieth century.

Permission for the performance of this play must be obtained from the author, May Miller, 2225 4th St., N. W., Washington, D. C.

# RIDING THE GOAT

A Play

By May Miller

## Scene

*The stuffy sitting-room of* Ant Hetty's *home. In the side right wall down stage, a door leading outside. When the door is open, a white stoop and a few white steps can be seen. In the middle of the left wall is a door leading into the kitchen. The room is furnished with the usual three-piece parlor set upholstered in red plush. Diagonally across the corner, an easel supports a portrait of a heavy-set man. Stretched from the table in the middle of the room to the back of a chair is an ironing board before which* Ant Hetty *stands ironing. She is a stout dark woman of about sixty. Her gingham house dress is open at the throat and a pair of well worn bedroom slippers are more off her feet than on. When the curtain rises, she pauses in her ironing of a stiffly starched white dress. She turns the iron upon the board and wetting her finger tests the heat. She sighs, shakes her head, dries her face on the end of her apron, and then taking the iron goes into the kitchen humming. She returns with another iron and continues her work singing "Such a Meetin's Goin' Be Here To-night." When she is half through the second chorus, a knock is heard at the outer door.* Ant Hetty *calls without stopping her work.*

ANT HETTY

Who's there?

CARTER

It's I, Carter.

ANT HETTY

Why don't cha come on in then?

[CARTER *enters with a physician's bag in his hand and a bundle under his arm. He is a slender brown fellow of medium height, neatly dressed in a dark suit. As he enters he takes off his straw hat and mops his brow with a pocket handkerchief.*]

CARTER

Good evening. How're you this time, Ant Hetty?

[*He sits on the sofa and* ANT HETTY *adjusts the ironing board so that she may see him as she talks.*]

ANT HETTY

Well, son, I guess I can't complain none. Is it hot 'nough fo' you?

CARTER

Too hot with all the work I've had to do.

ANT HETTY

You jest wait, honey, 'til I finishes ironin' this dress an' I'll make you some cool mint water.

CARTER

Thanks.

ANT HETTY

An' the worse is there ain't no change in sight. That

wasn't no wet moon that riz las' night. It was there a-shinin' over them roof tops as clear as a whistle—nary a rain ring 'bout it.

CARTER

You can't tell; maybe we'll catch a stray shower.

ANT HETTY

No, I don't b'lieve it. Them stray showers might fool the moon, but they nevah fools Ant Hetty. Sho as it's gonna rain, my feet and limbs begins to trouble me; an' ain't I been standin' on my feet most nigh all day widout ache nor pain? Anyhow who'd want a shower to-day—the day of the parade?

CARTER

I would.

ANT HETTY

[*Turning around abruptly.*]
Huh!

CARTER

Nothing.

ANT HETTY

[*She takes the dress off the board and drapes it carefully over the back of a chair. She talks to the dress as she smooths its folds.*]
Now you'se already spick and span fo' that perade to-night; ain't cha?

[*Looking up, she remembers* CARTER. *She takes the ironing board under her left arm and carries the iron in her right hand. She starts toward the kitchen.*]
Wait a minute, son, an' your Ant Hetty'll fix you up.

[*She goes into the kitchen.*]

[CARTER *stares at the white dress with a frown. He opens the bundle that he brought with him and shakes out his uniform. Holding it at arm's length, he views it with disgust.*]

CARTER

Damn that lodge and all its parades!

[*He throws the costume on the floor as* ANT HETTY *enters carrying a glass of her concoction. He hastily, almost guiltily, replaces the costume on the sofa.*]

ANT HETTY

Now drink that, honey, 'cause you mus' be tir'd chasin' roun' all day in this heat 'tending niggers. Since you been gran' mastah looks lak folks tryin' to outdo one 'nother callin' you.

CARTER

And before I joined the lodge, the same people wouldn't even consider me. [*He takes the proffered glass.*] Thanks.

ANT HETTY

[*Sitting in the rocker and watching* CARTER *as he drinks.*]

What was you doin' down in Haw Street so lon' befo' perade time?

CARTER

I had a call down the street and I dropped in thinking maybe Ruth would be home early to-day.

ANT HETTY

Yes, Ruth'll be alon' in a little while now. But Lawd, who's sick in our street now?

CARTER

Mrs. Riles called me to see Mr. Ike.

ANT HETTY

I 'clare ev'ry time that nigger gets tir'd of workin' he gits 'nother spell of rheumatics.

CARTER

Ant Hetty!

ANT HETTY

It's the truf. Lon' time ago I tol' Mary Riles that there wasn't nothin' the mattah wid Ike but laziness, an' she knows it.

CARTER

But he is sick.

ANT HETTY

'Course he's sick. He's made hisself sick a-thinkin' so. Ain't he been arguin' wid hisself fo' twenty years 'til now even him is convinced he's dyin'?

CARTER

But it's not so easy to convince a doctor.

ANT HETTY

Yes 'tis. Don't I remember ten years ago Mary Riles come runnin' in here. Me an' Mistah Chapman was settin' at the dinner table. She was a-weepin' an' sobbin' out that the doctor said Ike couldn't live 'nother week. I says to her then, "Mary Riles, you dry them tears. Ike'll bury the three of us." There was my Sam a-settin' there as strong as 'n ox; ain't he gone now an'

Ike's a-livin' on? Too bad though he can't march in that perade to-day.

CARTER

It's too hot for parades.

ANT HETTY

That you, the gran' mastah, a-talkin' 'bout it's too hot fo' perades?

CARTER

The heat's enough without having to wear that heavy regalia.

ANT HETTY

But it's only round the block that you has to go. Jest think of all the folks from Frémont to Green Street that'll be standin' on the corners to see the candidates in review!

CARTER

[*Bitterly.*]
How interesting for me!

ANT HETTY

Yes, you know Sara Blake's boy, James, jest turned eighteen an' that reformed scape-goat of a husban' of Rachel Lee's is both 'mong the candidates.

CARTER

Plague the candidates and their parade! I'm getting tired of all this useless thumping over cobblestones. Work all day, and parade all night. I can be just as good a doctor to them outside the lodge as in it.

ANT HETTY

Sh! son, be careful there. Of course, you'se talkin' to your Ant Hetty, but there's them that wouldn't understan'. The gran' 'xalted ruler of the United Order of Moabites can't afford to talk thata way.

CARTER

No, I guess not. All in the line of duty.

ANT HETTY

Now ain't that jest lak a man atalkin' 'bout duty an' there's fifty others wantin' your place. A woman ought to have it; she'd know a good thing.

CARTER

Any woman who'd want it is welcome to the trouble.

ANT HETTY

Oh, there's plenty. I ustah hear my poor dead Sam talk 'bout a woman who hid in a closet at her husban's lodge meeting an' heard an' saw all the 'nitiation. Nobody knew that she was there; but jes' as they was 'bout to leave, she sneezed an' they opens the closet an' there she was.

CARTER

[*Laughing.*]
What did they do to her?

ANT HETTY

They give her her choice—she could jine the lodge or die.

CARTER

Which did she take?

ANT HETTY

She went aridin' the goat, of course.

CARTER

[*Rising and taking his bag.*]
It must have been funny. I wish I could have seen that performance. [*He starts to roll the uniform to make a bundle.*] Ant Hetty, I guess I had better not wait for Ruth. I have a call to make on Frémont Avenue and I'll be back this way later.

ANT HETTY

All right; but why you gotta tote that uniform up an' down the street to get it all messed up?

CARTER

[*Quickly dropping the uniform.*]
Thanks. I hated to have to bring it with me, but I feared that I could not get uptown again. [*Laughing as he pauses in the doorway.*] And, Ant Hetty, be sure to take good care of the grand regalia of the grand exalted ruler of the United Order of Moabites.

[*He goes out.*]

ANT HETTY

[*Following* CARTER *to the door.*]
I wonder why he was laffin', the young upstart!

[ANT HETTY *goes to the sofa and smooths the rumpled uniform. She straightens the chairs, carefully arranges the much fondled white dress over her arm and starts toward the kitchen.* RUTH *enters. She is a tall, well developed brown girl of about eighteen. Her smoothly brushed hair and the*

*pretty checked gingham she wears bespeak personal care.*]

RUTH

Hello, grandma!

ANT HETTY

[*Pausing at the kitchen door.*]
How'd you make out this time, child?

RUTH

Very well. I rode down though; I was too tired to walk.

ANT HETTY

Did you meet Doctor Carter?

RUTH

[*A little excited.*]
No. Was he here?

ANT HETTY

Jes' lef' the minute befo' you come in. He lef' that uniform an' I guess he'll be back.

RUTH

[*Talking rapidly as if to change the subject.*]
Grandma, you should have looked in the sewing room today. You know the Framinghams on Charles Street, don't you?

ANT HETTY

[*Coming back into the room to listen.*]
Now listen, who you'se askin'! 'Course I do; ain't them the folks Mary Riles works fo'?

RUTH

Well, the Framingham girl marries next week.

ANT HETTY

You don't say so!

RUTH

Yes, and we finished her wedding clothes to-day—every stich by hand. I'm so tired now that I can't see anything but ruffles, tucks, and laces. I think I'll lie down a little.

[*She starts toward the door.*]

ANT HETTY

[*Shocked.*]

You ain't got no time to sleep an' eat an' see the parade too.

RUTH

It's too hot for parades.

ANT HETTY

[*Looking at* RUTH *closely.*]

I've heard that 'nough fo' one day. You young ones gits me. You'se too pert fo' your years. There's Doctor Carter now agettin' too high an' mighty fo' parades, says he's tir'd of useless marchin'. Did you evah hear the lak of it?

RUTH

I don't blame him.

ANT HETTY

Huh!

RUTH

No, mam, I don't see any sense in all that parading either.

ANT HETTY

O Lawd! an' did I evah think I'd live to hear Sam Chapman's granddaughter talk lak that!

RUTH

But, grandma, what sense is there in it?

ANT HETTY

What would your grandpap's funeral've been without his lodges?

RUTH

I don't know; I hardly remember it.

ANT HETTY

The peradin' of his brothers wid their swords ashinin' an' their plumes awavin' was a gran' sight.

RUTH

Yes, mam.

ANT HETTY

But the brightest spot in the whole affair was when they lit them candles 'round the coffin an' the gran' mastah stood at the head ahittin' Sam wid his sword yellin' "Rise, Brother Chapman, an' jine the order of departed Moabites." They beat on him so lon' an' I was alookin' so close I thought I seen Sam move under them dim lights.

RUTH

Yes, mam, I am sure that was a grand funeral.

ANT HETTY

'Course there was them as called him a habitual jiner, but I didn't mind. They was only jealous of that turnout, cause Sam was a member of three lodges an' nary a one failed to show up on his big day.

RUTH

But I can't see that that made any difference to him then.

ANT HETTY

I didn't 'spect you to see. But, child, you'd better hurry an' learn that you gotta see lak some other folks sees if you wanta git alon'! Take Doctor Carter now. He needn't 'spect to get too uppish fo' the lodge an' still come down hopin' to 'tend these folks.

RUTH

But, grandma, they need him so.

ANT HETTY

'Course they does but they won't have him.

RUTH

What will they do then?

ANT HETTY

Jes' what they done befo' he come. That good ol' white doctor is still livin' an' I guess he's got a few mo' of them pills.

RUTH

Yes, and just a few more of us will die.

ANT HETTY

Well, what diff'rence do that make? Ain't people been dyin' since there was folks?

RUTH

It's all right if it can't be helped, but Doctor Carter can cure them and he wants to.

ANT HETTY

If he's so set on helpin' his folks why don't he act lak it? Instid he laffs at our peradin'—I know.

RUTH

Grandma, why are you so anxious about the parade?

ANT HETTY

Ain't your Ant Sara's Jim marchin' wid the candidates? It seems lak ev'ryone's got somebody an' me widout a frazzlin' soul in the line.

RUTH

I don't understand why you would worry.

ANT HETTY

It was so diffrent when your grandpap was livin'; I had somethin' to watch fo' them. Since he died I been out of it. Then recently I been thinkin', "Here's Ruthie growed up wid a nice doctor an' he gran' mastah." I could hold my haid higher 'n the res'. Now he's 'bout to spoil it all, an' you aidin' an' abettin' him in it.

RUTH

It's not exactly that, grandma.

ANT HETTY

You know, sometimes I wishes you had liked Chris.

RUTH

Please, grandma, don't start that again.

ANT HETTY

'Course I thinks Doctor's all right in some ways, but them educated chaps always manages to think a little diff'rent. I guess that's where the trouble comes wid you—them sisters at that convent kinda educated you 'way from me.

RUTH

Grandma, I'm not away from you in any way, but I just can't marry Chris.

[*Her voice breaks.*]

ANT HETTY

There now, honey, I didn't mean fo' you to git all riz up 'bout it. You'se tired. Set down a minute an' res' while I fixes you a bite to eat.

[ANT HETTY *goes to the kitchen. A knock is heard at the outer door.* RUTH *walks wearily over and opens the door.* JONES *enters. He is a very dark, stockily built fellow of about twenty-three. He wears the uniform of the order, the long-tail, double-breasted coat with bright brass buttons. The badges of the order decorate his breast. His helmet-like hat is decorated with a finely curled white ostrich feather. As he enters, he grins broadly.*

RUTH

Hello, Chris! Coming in?

JONES

I guess mebbe I kin fin' time to tell some of my good friends hello; but 'course this is the busy day an' I ain't got much time—me bein' made the gran' inspector fo' the lodge.

RUTH

[*With an effort.*]
Isn't that lovely!

ANT HETTY

[*Entering from kitchen.*]
Christopher Columbus Jones, they ain't gone an' made you lodge inspector, has they?

JONES

[*Proudly drawing himself up.*]
Yes, mam, that's jest what they done.

ANT HETTY

You know I always tol' your ma when she give you that gran' an' mighty name that you was gonna be a great man some day. If your ma had only lived to see this day!

JONES

[*Complacently.*]
Yes, 'tis too bad she can't see me, ain't it? What's the mattah, Ruth, you ain't sayin' nothin'?

RUTH

Your uniform does look nice.

ANT HETTY

It sho does but you wouldn't go doublin' it up an throwin' it all roun', would you?

[*She looks significantly at* CARTER'S *rumpled suit but* JONES *is busy surveying himself in the mirror which hangs on the back wall.*]

JONES

No, Ant Hetty, 'course not. When my pa give me this

suit, it was such a decent suit that I jest keeps it decent.

ANT HETTY

Your pappy bein' the richest drayman down this way, I bet he could give you many a suit.

JONES

Yes, he is rich; but I does take good care of this suit. 'Course I'm not talkin' 'bout nobody, but there is them that is high in the order what don't look haf so good.

RUTH

Many of them haven't the time you have, Chris, because most of them are working since they have no rich fathers.

JONES

Yes, that's too bad, but they oughta fin' time.

ANT HETTY

We that stands an' watches you pass knows who's keerful an' who ain't. [*Sniffing toward the kitchen.*] That my baby's dinner burnin'?

[*She goes into the kitchen.*]

JONES

I thinks mebbe the lodge oughta stan' an' watch itself in perade sometime, then it might reward them as deserves it.

RUTH

Who is unrewarded now, Chris?

JONES

Nobody perticular. 'Course lodge inspector is a mighty

good job, but I don't see why I couldn't be gran' mastah same as some nigger from the outside. I'm jest as fittin' as that doctor chap.

RUTH

Then you aren't satisfied?

JONES

I'm proud all right of this job, but I'd be prouder of that one. Mebbe if I was gran' mastah you'd like me a little better.

RUTH

Chris, I do like you. Haven't we been friends since we were kids?

JONES

You remember how we ustah race scrubbin' the front stoop? You always made yourn whiter'n mine an' got through sooner.

RUTH

You never did like to work.

JONES

Is that the reason you ain't lovin' me?

RUTH

No, I can't say it's that.

JONES

You'se right, 'taint that. You ustah be my gal 'til you went up on Vine Street to that there place wid the high wall 'roun' it. Since then, you ain't been yourself—wantin' something new all the time.

RUTH

No, Chris, I haven't been the same.

JONES

Turned me down wid all them ol' things, huh.

RUTH

I told you I am still your friend.

JONES

Frien'! I don't want you fo' no frien' when that doctor fella's got you fo' a sweetheart. But don't think I'm givin' you up so easy. Remember how I ustah fight all the gang in Haw Street fo' you? I'm grown a little but I ain't changed much.

[*He starts toward the door.* RUTH *starts after him.*]

RUTH

Chris, come back a minute.

JONES

What'cha want?

RUTH

What did you mean by that?

JONES

Nothin'.

RUTH

Oh, yes, you did, too.

JONES

Well, do you think I'm gonna let any fella step in an' take

the job that oughta be mine an' my gal to boot an' not raise my hand to stop it?

RUTH

What are you going to do?

JONES

Don't think doctors can't make no mistakes an' just remember Christopher Columbus Jones is watchin' him.

[*He goes out the front door.* RUTH *stands in the doorway looking down the street.* ANT HETTY *enters from the kitchen.*]

ANT HETTY

I 'clare wid all these hindrances nobody kin get a bite. Come now, Ruthie, 'cause I know you're most nigh starved to death.

RUTH

[*Standing in the doorway.*]
No'm, I'm not so hungry now.

ANT HETTY

Chris take your appetite?

RUTH

No'm.

ANT HETTY

But you does lak him a little, don't you, honey?

RUTH

Yes, mam, of course, I do.

ANT HETTY

That's right. Jest remember you'll please your granny. Chris is a right nice boy even if he won't work; but

Lawd, he don't have to wid his pappy stablin' five horses an' buggies an' everythin'.

RUTH

Chris is all right.

ANT HETTY

Much better 'n some uppish niggers I knows wid new fangled ideas. Now Doctor Carter—

RUTH

[*Turning back into the room.*]
Sh! here he comes.

ANT HETTY

Talk 'bout the devil!

CARTER

[*Standing in the open door.*]
Here I am, back again, Ant Hetty. Hello, Ruth!

RUTH

Hello, Doctor!

ANT HETTY

Anybody out yit?

CARTER

A few folks dressed in white are sitting on their stoops.

ANT HETTY

I know'd it. I was atellin' Sara this mornin' as how them folks 'ud have on everythin' but the kitchen stove. [*She goes toward the kitchen door.*] Ruthie, don't forgit your dinner. I'm gonna dress.

RUTH

No'm.

CARTER

What's the matter, Ruth? You haven't much to say to-day.

RUTH

Nothing.

CARTER

I know better than that.

RUTH

It's nothing much, Doctor Carter—

CARTER

How many more times shall I tell you to drop the "Doctor"?

RUTH

I remember, but you're so different from the rest of the men I know.

CARTER

Tell me about that later. Right now I want to know what is troubling you.

[*He pushes his uniform in the corner of the sofa and sits down.*]

RUTH

[*Sitting in a chair near the sofa.*]

Are you—are you going to give up the lodge?

CARTER

Why do you ask?

RUTH

Grandma said you were talking doubtful about it.

CARTER

Oh, Ruth, I am sick of all that foolishness. From the day I put on that little white apron and rode a bony gray mare around the block, I've been hating it, and I'm just about through with all of it.

RUTH

They don't think it's foolishness.

CARTER

They've got to be taught.

RUTH

But not in that way.

CARTER

Why?

RUTH

Because I know them better than you do. If you leave their lodge now, they won't have you attend them; even grandma wouldn't and she's no member.

CARTER

Well, if that's the way they feel, let them cut me. I guess I can manage to get along.

RUTH

But they will suffer for it.

CARTER

Which will be their own fault. They ought to suffer.

RUTH

But aren't they your people?

CARTER

Of course, they are, but not even for my people am I going to don that regalia again.

[*He grabs the uniform, looks at it a minute in disgust and drops it in a heap on the floor.*]

RUTH

Don't say that! There are too many waiting for you to take just that attitude.

CARTER

Maybe, but let's forget them. [*He goes over to* RUTH's *chair and takes her hand to help her rise.*] Come here, I want to say something to you.

RUTH

[*Standing beside him and nervously measuring heights with her hand.*]

In these new shoes, I'm as tall as you are—not quite so big though.

CARTER

Bigger in some ways. I guess that's why I care so much.

RUTH

Do you mean that?

CARTER

Surely. Why?

RUTH

Wouldn't you do almost anything for a person you liked that way?

CARTER

You know I would.

RUTH

[*Slipping her hand on his coat, coaxingly.*]
Well, march to-day—just to-day, please.

CARTER

[*Looking away.*]
That's another matter.

RUTH

Then you didn't mean what you said?

CARTER

Certainly I did. I'll always mean that part.

RUTH

But you won't march?

CARTER

Ruth, I am tired. I've been working all day in this heat and heaven knows when I will collect some of those bills.

RUTH

And if you don't stay in the lodge, they may never pay you.

CARTER

Consider it then my contribution to charity.

RUTH

You have definitely decided?

CARTER

Yes, and I wish you wouldn't say anything more about it.

RUTH

I can't help feeling that you're unwise.

CARTER

Since you are so crazy about parading, it's really a pity you can't march yourself.

RUTH

William!

CARTER

Excuse me, Ruth. I'd better be going. I'm talking all kinds of ways. Good-by, Ruth.

[*He takes his bag from the table and goes toward the door hurriedly.*]

RUTH

Good-by! [*Starting after him.*] William!

[ANT HETTY *appears in the kitchen doorway with her white dress on. She is struggling with the many hooks and eyes.* RUTH *turns abruptly away from the door.*]

ANT HETTY

Fix this, Ruthie. [RUTH *goes to her grandmother and fastens the hooks.*] Doctor Carter gone?

RUTH

[*Slyly kicking* CARTER'S *uniform under the sofa.*] Yes, mam.

ANT HETTY

It's gittin' late, an' me not dressed yit. I leaned out the window upstairs an' heard them callin' the line together. Them folks'll be havin' a monkey an' parrot time, an' I'll be missin' it. Have you ate yit?

RUTH

No'm.

ANT HETTY

[*Going back to the kitchen.*]
Well, hurry.

RUTH

Yes, mam.

[*She hears a bugle call, goes to the door and looks out. She comes back into the room, views herself in the mirror a minute. Hastily she goes to the sofa, reaches under it and pulls out the suit. Without taking off her dress she dons the costume which is like* JONES' *except for a bright golden plume on the hat and a large black mask. She views herself in the mirror and goes out as* ANT HETTY *calls from the kitchen.*]

ANT HETTY

Ruthie, Ruthie, how many mo' times has I got to call you? [*Entering the room fully dressed.*] I 'clare that gal's gone on. [*She rushes to the door and meets* CARTER *entering.*] Ain't you gone yit?

CARTER

I had. Where's Ruth?

ANT HETTY

She always sets on the Riles' stoop; the steps is higher an' you can see better. I guess she's there. Why?

CARTER

Nothing particularly. I just wanted to tell her something.

[*He looks for his uniform on the sofa.*]

ANT HETTY

Why don't you hurry an' git in line? You'se late already.

CARTER

I want my uniform; I thought I left it here.

ANT HETTY

You taken it wid you when you left befo', didn't you?

CARTER

No, I left it right here. [*He looks nervously under the couch. The strains of "Maryland, My Maryland" are heard.*] Oh, well, it's too late now. I could never fall in in time.

ANT HETTY

[*Harshly.*]
You didn't mean to go in the first place.

CARTER

Yes, I did.

ANT HETTY

But you said as how it was too warm fo' parades.

CARTER

I did, but I have changed my mind about that and a number of other things.

ANT HETTY

You sho'lly had me upset 'cause I was athinkin' you was giving up the lodge an' everythin'. I'm sartinly glad to fin' you'se still got good sense. [*The strains of the mu-*

*sic are heard again.* AUNT HETTY *opens the street door wide and sits in the doorway.* CARTER *looks from the window.*] I won't make the corner now. I guess I kin see jest as well from the stoop mebbe. You'd better set here wid me.

CARTER

No, I don't think it wise to be seen. I'm here and not here.

ANT HETTY

You'll have to tell them that you was called on a mattah of life an' death.

CARTER

All right, Ant Hetty, I guess I shall have to depend on you to help me tell it.

[*The strains of music grow louder and there is silence for a minute as both* ANT HETTY *and* CARTER *watch intently.*]

ANT HETTY

Doctor, ain't they gran'? In the twilight, they looks jest lak 'n army acomin' on. Look undah that lamppost 'cross the street. See Linda Dodd?

CARTER

Who?

ANT HETTY

Her wid the new silk parasol an' no rain in sight.

CARTER

Uh-huh!

ANT HETTY

Watch her bowin' an' scrapin' to ev'rybody jest ahopin' somebody'll ask fo' Lew.

CARTER

Which one do you call Lew?

[*The music is very near.*]

ANT HETTY

That's Lew—the fella what's leadin' the ban. I 'clare I don't know when that nigger prances mos'—when he's leadin' that ban' in perades or shoutin' in church on Sundays.

[*They continue to look intently.*]

ANT HETTY

Doctor, look! Who's leading them candidates?

CARTER

Only my assistant could ride for me, and that isn't he, for he's very fat. [*Pressing closer to the window.*] That's my outfit, too—mask and all!

ANT HETTY

If I didn't see you asettin' right there, I'd vow it was you. Even got that sway of yourn.

[*The strains of music become fainter.*]

CARTER

Of all odd things! How did any one get my uniform? I would have sworn that I left it right here. I wonder if I could have taken the bundle out and lost it in my hurry; but who in creation had nerve enough to wear it?

ANT HETTY

Some low-down rascal wid the nerve of Judas.

CARTER

[*Starting toward the table and reaching for his hat.*]
I'm going to find out.

ANT HETTY

Wait a minute. They're disbandin' at the corner. Well, will you look at Sara Blake! She's gone to cryin' on her James' neck. An' there's Rachel Lee jest makin' a fool of herself over that no-count man. [*In disgust she comes into the room but goes to the window.*] I 'clare Chris jest keeps tryin' to talk to that scapegoat in your outfit. The rascal's sho in a hurry an' he's haided this way.

CARTER

[*Grasping his hat.*]
Well, I'll meet him.

ANT HETTY

[*Suddenly turning away from the window, she grasps* CARTER'S *arm, and almost drags him into the kitchen.*]
Now we'll fin' out somethin' 'bout this rascal.

[*As* ANT HETTY *closes the kitchen door,* RUTH *dashes in and locks the outer door. She is panting breathlessly, but without pausing she tears off the mask and helmet and undresses rapidly. A knock is heard at the outer door. She rolls the regalia together and opening the kitchen door tosses it in without looking. She opens the door for* JONES *who enters sword in hand.*]

JONES

[*Breathlessly.*]
Where's gran' mastah?

RUTH

[*Nervously.*]
Grand Master! What made you think that he was here?

JONES

You ain't foolin' Christopher Columbus Jones. I seen the one what marched in that perade come in here aracin' an' I believes you was the one.

RUTH

I—the grand master!

JONES

What'cha call yourself adoin'? Tryin' to save him—huh. You ain't bided your time right 'cause all us knowed how that doctor fella's been gittin' tir'd of us an' we's been watchin' him. When I goes back an' tells them what you done fo' him he better make hisself scarce in this neighborhood.

RUTH

But, Chris, what can you tell them?

JONES

Tell 'em that I knows the doctor got you to march fo' him in our line.

RUTH

You would tell them that!

JONES

Ruth, you oughta be 'shamed of yourself agoin' back on your own folks fo' some outside nigger.

[*The kitchen door opens and* CARTER, *dressed in the uniform, hat in hand, stands in the doorway almost*

*overshadowing* ANT HETTY *who is behind him.* RUTH *and* JONES *stare at him stupidly.*]

CARTER

Good evening, inspector. Didn't our parade move along smoothly?

JONES

[*With an effort.*]
Yes, sah, yes, sah, it sho did.

CARTER

Ant Hetty said she enjoyed it a great deal. What did your friends think of it?

JONES

I ain't seen my friends, but I guess I got time to speak to 'em an' ax how the new inspector done. Well, folks, I guess I'll be movin' 'lon'.

RUTH

Don't forget to tell them how grand I thought you looked.

JONES

All right. Bye, folks.

ANT HETTY

Good-by, Chris. [*She follows* JONES *to the door and closes it after him.*] Ruthie, how'd you evah do it?

RUTH

[*Sitting on the couch and sighing with relief.*]
I don't know.

ANT HETTY

Well, you sartinly saved the doctor's skin 'cause there's mo' lak Chris jest waitin' to give him the devil up Sixth Street.

CARTER

But, Ruth, how did you every carry it through?

RUTH

I couldn't have if you hadn't put on the suit and come in at just the right moment.

CARTER

I confess that I was a little alarmed when I came back and couldn't find that suit.

RUTH

Then you did change your mind? [*She goes toward* CARTER *and starts to embrace him.*] Oh, Doctor—William!

ANT HETTY

There, now, ain't you got no respect fo' my presence. [*Chuckling.*] Go on, Doctor, when a gal does that much fo' a man, he oughta hug her.

[*She starts toward the door.*]

RUTH

Where're you going, grandma?

ANT HETTY

Jest keep your shirt on, Miss, I'm goin'. I got to talk to Mary Riles 'bout the perade. [*Calling from the doorway.*] Lawd, child, I knows you mus' be faint wid hun-

ger. You go right out in that kitchen an' eat 'cause nobody's fixin' to lose you.

[*She goes out the front door.*]

RUTH

Yes, mam. [*Sinking on sofa exhausted.*] I'm so glad that's over.

CARTER

[*Standing before her.*]
Ruth, I don't know what to say.

RUTH

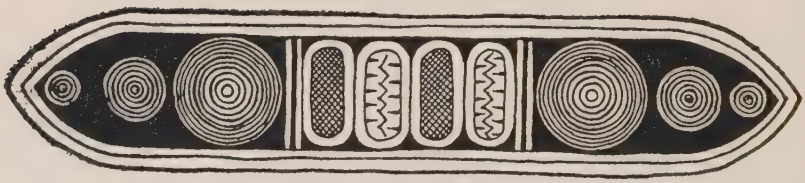
Please don't let's talk about it at all. I tremble every time I think of what I did.

CARTER

[*Stooping and placing his helmet on her head.*]
Very well, grand master, just as you command.

[*As the curtain falls he kneels before* RUTH *in mock salute.*]

CURTAIN



"Be proud, my Race, in mind and soul"
Thy name is writ on Glory's scroll
In characters of fire.
High 'mid the clouds of Fame's bright sky
Thy banner's blazoned folds now fly,
And truth shall lift them higher.

—*Dunbar*

# THE BLACK HORSEMAN

A Play

by

Willis Richardson

Adapted to the capacity of advanced students in high school and college.

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## CHARACTERS

MASSINISSA, *King of East Numidia*
SYPHAX, *Prince of West Numidia*
CASINTHA, ROSIOBA, PHILLIPA — *Princesses in East Numidia*
FRIATUS, *Counselor to Massinissa*
CLAUDIUS, EUBONIUS — *Soldiers*
ROMAN ENVOY
ENVOY
MESSENGER
MEMBERS OF MASSINISSA'S COURT

Time—204 B.C.
Place—Numidia in Africa.

Permission for the performance of this play must be obtained from the author, Willis Richardson, 2023 13th St., N. W., Washington, D. C.

# THE BLACK HORSEMAN

A Play — By Willis Richardson

*We see a spacious hall in the castle of* Massinissa, *King of East Numidia. At the right is a wide arched entrance near which are* Claudius *and* Eubonius, *two soldiers standing at ease. At the center near the rear wall is a dais on which stands a large, high-backed chair. There is no other furniture in the hall. At the left is a smaller entrance. Since no superior is present the soldiers are leisurely discussing the affairs of the day.*

CLAUDIUS

[*The elder soldier.*]
There's something in the air, Eubonius,
Something that seems a little strange to me.

EUBONIUS

What is more strange than Syphax's visit here?

CLAUDIUS

Nothing's more strange than that; it's that I speak of.
He who has ever been our enemy
Now comes to us with a smile in the guise of friend.

EUBONIUS

But why the change from enemy to friend?

CLAUDIUS

There is no change, he comes in the guise of friend.

EUBONIUS

He may be a spy of Carthage.

CLAUDIUS

[*Surprised at* EUBONIUS.]

A prince a spy!
A prince would never be a spy, Eubonius.

EUBONIUS

He may be a noble spy who hopes to gain
A kingdom by his spying.

CLAUDIUS

What do you mean?

EUBONIUS

The whole world knows that Massinissa is
A strong ally of Rome; Syphax of Carthage,
And both those nations hope for power here
In Africa. Now Massinissa is
A mighty arm on which Scipio depends,
An arm without which Roman power here
Is close to nothing, really less than nothing.
What if that right arm should be maimed by Syphax?

CLAUDIUS

Maimed how?

EUBONIUS

Maimed somehow.

CLAUDIUS

But do you not know
That Syphax is a worm to Massinissa,
A petty nothing? A child in a giant's hands?

EUBONIUS

And yet a worm may eat away an oak.

CLAUDIUS

[*Shaking his head.*]
You have not lived as long as I have lived;
You do not know the power of Massinissa;
You have not followed him to war so often;
You have not seen the king of horsemen ride
With a fury that appalled the enemy.

EUBONIUS

I have followed him to war, have seen him ride,
But I know that he is human and may fail,
May be outwitted.

CLAUDIUS

He will be outwitted
By no one you can name, and least of all
By Syphax whom he watches night and day.

EUBONIUS

You look on Massinissa as a god.

CLAUDIUS

Not as a god, Eubonius, but as a man
Great among men, a king great among kings.
In older days when he was but a prince,
Called the Numidian Horseman by the world,

By Carthage and by Rome, I followed him.
He rode his horse as if a part of it
And dismounted like a king stepping from his throne.

EUBONIUS

If I were he and had all the power you give him,
It would not please me to be like a king;
I should be a king.

CLAUDIUS

He is a king, our king.

EUBONIUS

[*With much fire.*]
I should be king of both Numidias;
I should conquer Hasdrubal and be king of Carthage;
I should not be Rome's ally, Rome should be mine;
I should rule Rome and all the world with it!

CLAUDIUS

[*Astonished.*]
Rule Rome! Do you forget great Scipio?
Scipio of Rome is great and powerful!

EUBONIUS

And is not Massinissa powerful,
And great and black?

CLAUDIUS

But Romans rule the world.

EUBONIUS

I should be great and black and powerful,
Fearless of Romans, fearless of the world.

CLAUDIUS

You are ambitious.

EUBONIUS

Youth is ever so.

CLAUDIUS

If you ruled here Numidia might be crushed.

EUBONIUS

Numidia might be the kingdom of the world.

CLAUDIUS

[*Looking towards the left.*]
On guard! Some one is coming up the lawn!

EUBONIUS

[*Looking that way as they move to their position.*]
Three princesses and all three look disturbed.

CLAUDIUS

The whole kingdom is disturbed and with good reason.

EUBONIUS

Sharpen your ears and you may learn the reason.

CLAUDIUS

I know the reason. Syphax is the reason.

[EUBONIUS *does not reply for* CASINTHA, ROSIOBA *and* PHILLIPA, *three beautiful brown princesses, are entering from the left.*]

CASINTHA

[*The eldest princess, moving in a tired manner to the steps.*]

I have not slept two nights, Rosioba,
Since Syphax has been here. I cannot rest.

ROSIOBA

I have not slept at all.

PHILLIPA

[*The youngest.*]

Neither have I.

ROSIOBA

If he should stay as long as he has stayed
I could not bear it.

CASINTHA

But he will not stay.
Before this sunset he'll go on to Carthage;
And on the message he will take with him
Depends our happiness, Numidia's future.

PHILLIPA

[*Curiously.*]

What message do you mean? From whom to whom?

CASINTHA

A message from Massinissa to Sophonisba,
A message from Massinissa to Hasdrubal.

ROSIOBA

How did you learn so much of this, Casintha?

CASINTHA

At every chance I listened to their talk.
Last midnight when you two were in your rooms
Dreaming or worrying about the future
I crept to Massinissa's door and listened.
Syphax was there and hinted many things;
But Massinissa did not answer him,
He wisely drove the talk to other channels.

ROSIOBA

[*Very much interested.*]
What did you learn?

CASINTHA

That in a cunning way
Syphax was offering Sophonisba's hand
To Massinissa if he would agree
To Syphax being king of both Numidias.

ROSIOBA

How could this be? A king is always king.

CASINTHA

The kingdom would be shifted to the west.
Where Syphax rules.

ROSIOBA

And this place where we live?

CASINTHA

Would be ruled over merely by a prince
Called Massinissa.

ROSIOBA

What a foolish scheme!

PHILLIPA

[*Who has been listening attentively.*]
And you eavesdropped to learn all this, Casintha?

CASINTHA

I listened to learn it.

PHILLIPA

[*Innocently.*]
Oh, but what a sin!

CASINTHA

What woman would not stoop to listen where
Her happiness depends on the thing said?
More than my happiness depends on this;
Numidia's future, Massinissa's honor,
The peace of all of us, our very lives.

ROSIOBA

Imagine Sophonisba ruling here;
The pale, white, Carthaginian Sophonisba
With yellow hair, blue eyes and bloodless limbs.

CASINTHA

The cold, white, passionless Princess Sophonisba
With a cold heart and a mind that thinks for Carthage.

PHILLIPA

I still say you should not have stooped to listen.

CASINTHA

[*Pityingly.*]
Phillipa, you are so young, so very young.

ROSIOBA

You are too young to understand these things.

PHILLIPA

[*To* CASINTHA.]
What will you do now that you know so much?

CASINTHA

We'll plead with Massinissa, we'll beseech him.
We'll beg him not to look on Sophonisba.

ROSIOBA

[*Looking towards the right.*]
There they are now. There's kingly Massinissa,
And there is Syphax ever at his shoulder
Whispering some tricky evil in his ear.

CASINTHA

They are coming this way. How I'd love to know
If it's new honors Syphax pleads for now.

PHILLIPA

You said you knew. You stooped last night to listen.

CASINTHA

I know his last night's cunning, but this may be
Some new invention of his crafty mind.

ROSIOBA

We'll stand just out the threshold by the wall
And we may hear what's said.

PHILLIPA

More eavesdropping?

CASINTHA

When you are old as we are now, Phillipa.
You'll learn, unless you are a stupid fool,
That all that seems wrong is not always wrong.

ROSIOBA

Most surely not. I learned that long ago.
The twisting of the truth into a lie,
A broken word, the listening at a door,
May save a kingdom and bring happiness;
While a too rigid clinging to the rules
Of "thou shalt not do this," "shalt not do that,"
May bring eternal sorrow, utter woe.

PHILLIPA

I have been taught that wrong is ever wrong.

CASINTHA

A deed is measured by the good it does
Or by the evil.

ROSIOBA

[*Taking* PHILLIPA'S *hand.*]
Come on out, Phillipa;
You do not have to listen, we'll do that;
You go and read a story in the shade,
We'll be poor human women listening.

[*They go out left. Presently* MASSINISSA, *the tall, dark king, enters accompanied by* SYPHAX, *a smaller, fairer man who walks just a little in the rear speaking as he walks.*]

SYPHAX

[*As they go toward the dais.*]
There's reason in it. Beautiful Sophonisba,
Princess of Carthage, then would be your bride;
And Hasdrubal, her father, king of Carthage—
You see, you have the hope of being king.

MASSINISSA

[*Turning to* SYPHAX *after climbing the dais.*]
What glory's in the hope of being king
To one who is a king? I cannot see it.

SYPHAX

But king of Carthage. Carthage's a great country,
A kingdom rivaling Rome if any does.

MASSINISSA

No kingdom is more powerful than Numidia.

SYPHAX

Before this sunset I depart for Carthage
And hope to take your answer back with me
To Hasdrubal, who hopes for your alliance.

MASSINISSA

[*Sitting.*]
These last three days you have entreated me
But I have closed my ears to all you've said;
Now I shall listen with an open mind.

SYPHAX

I know you have admired Sophonisba,
But Hasdrubal, her father, favors me;

Yet more than favoring me he yearns for power—
Power to equal Rome's. By you alone
Of all in Africa can he obtain
The power he yearns for.

MASSINISSA

And what is your plan?

SYPHAX

That you wed Sophonisba. By that act
You'll be a prince in the mighty courts of Carthage.
How many steps are there from prince to king?

MASSINISSA

[*Musing.*]
One step—one little step and a prince is king.

SYPHAX

One little step and the Numidian horseman
Is king of Carthage.

MASSINISSA

But that little step
Is sometimes hard to make, sometimes so hard
It's never made.

SYPHAX

And sometimes often made.
What step was ever hard for Massinissa?

MASSINISSA

[*After a moment's thought.*]
Your plan is full of promise, but for all this
What do you wish of me?

SYPHAX

I only wish
That you renounce the kingdom of Numidia
To become a prince in Carthage and later king.

MASSINISSA

And what of my own country, East Numidia?

SYPHAX

You'll then rule here as prince as I do now
In West Numidia.

MASSINISSA

What will you be then?

SYPHAX

The kingdom would be shifted to the west
And I'd be king of all Numidia.

MASSINISSA

Your offer is a cup brimful of hope,
But with a drop of poison in it, Syphax.
That "King of all Numidia" is the poison
That may pollute the cup; and yet I'll think
And you may take my answer back with you.

SYPHAX

[*Pleased.*]
Then I'll prepare for home and then for Carthage
With happy tidings for King Hasdrubal.

[*He backs out bowing and leaves* MASSINISSA *thinking deeply. Presently* CASINTHA *and* ROSIOBA *come hurriedly from the left.*]

CASINTHA

Massinissa! Hear us, Massinissa!

MASSINISSA

[*Surprised by their sudden entrance.*]
My ears are ever yours. What troubles you?

ROSIOBA

We know the plans of Syphax, we have listened;
He means no good to you or to Numidia.

MASSINISSA

[*Musing.*]
The plans of Syphax; I was thinking of them.
He longs to be King of Numidia
And offers me the hand of Sophonisba
With all the hope of Carthaginian power
If I will grant his wish, but I am doubtful.

CASINTHA

[*Kneeling.*]
Sire, do not grant it. Think a moment, Sire,
Of how your people love you, think of how
Your soldiers fought to give you power here
In Africa, the nation's treasure house.

ROSIOBA

[*Joining* CASINTHA'S *plea.*]
Think of the strangers you would tarry with,
Then think of us, your own dark women who
Love you as they love life; but most of all
Think of a pale, cold bride whose kisses are

But shadows of a kiss, whose love would be
An empty dream of love, and give him "no"
For an answer to take back to Hasdrubal.

MASSINISSA

Are you concerned for me, or for yourselves,
Or for Numidia.

ROSIOBA

Were we ever selfish?

CASINTHA

We are concerned for all, your majesty,
For you, Numidia, Africa and ourselves.

MASSINISSA

And you think I should weaken Africa,
Enslave Numidia, myself and you
If I should wed the Carthaginian Princess?

ROSIOBA

We think of many things, but most of all
We think of Syphax plotting.

MASSINISSA

Plotting how?

ROSIOBA

There is some trick about the whole thing, Sire;
And even if there were not who would give
A kingdom to be prince of anywhere?
Even Rome, our friendly ally, is not worth it.

MASSINISSA

[*Speaking slowly.*]
I think you speak with reason, to be prince
At Rome is less than to be ruler here.

CASINTHA

And you will give Prince Syphax such an answer?

MASSINISSA

My answer shall support our pact with Rome,
Please all of you and keep the kingdom here
As you would have it; and if you are happy
With this decision send Syphax to me.

ROSIOBA

[*Joyfully.*]
We are most happy! We are overjoyed!
[*She goes over to* EUBONIUS.]

CASINTHA

All in the kingdom will be most happy, Sire.

ROSIOBA

[*To* EUBONIUS.]
His majesty would have Prince Syphax here.
[EUBONIUS *goes out of sight but soon returns to his post.*]

CASINTHA

There'll be rejoicing when this news is spread
To the four corners of the kingdom, Sire;
For every one was fearful you would go
To wed Hasdrubal's daughter.

MASSINISSA

They were wrong.
Go and desert you and Numidia?

ROSIOBA

We thought not of ourseleves so much, 'twas you
We thought of. How would you fare at the hands
Of Carthage who might scorn a king turned prince?

MASSINISSA

And how would Rome look on Numidia?

CASINTHA

We think with scorn if you deserted us.

MASSINISSA

I should scorn myself if I had done the thing
I dreamed of.

ROSIOBA

Dream of it no more.
Prepare your answer for that western prince
Who comes dreaming of glory for himself.

MASSINISSA

I have prepared it. He shall know how wise
Is the counsel of the women of Numidia.

CASINTHA

[*Looking towards the right.*]
The prince of schemers comes to say farewell.
[Massinissa *rises as* Syphax *enters in all his finery. Two attendants accompany him.*]

SYPHAX

Hail, Numidian King! Hail, Massinissa!
Hail and farewell!

MASSINISSA

May every joy be yours.
Farewell, our princely neighbor, may the gods speed you
On toward Carthage with a happy heart
To greet Hasdrubal's daughter.

SYPHAX

[*Hopefully.*]

When I greet her
Am I to say the great Numidian Horseman
Is following me in haste and eagerness?

MASSINISSA

[*Sternly.*]

No. Say that Massinissa still remains
King of Numidia, and friend of Rome.

SYPHAX

[*Embarrassed.*]

But, Sire, I understood—

MASSINISSA

And if you did
You were too hasty in your understanding.

SYPHAX

You led me to believe you would agree—

MASSINISSA

By what word did I lead you to believe
My answer would be different from this?

SYPHAX

Perhaps not by your words, but by your actions.

MASSINISSA

I acted as a man untaught, unwise;
I acted as a fool, not as a king;
'Twas left to those with clearer heads than mine
To show my error; and my answer comes
From wiser minds and tenderer hearts to you.
The wisdom of Numidian women speaks
To you through these dull, foolish lips of mine!

SYPHAX

And do you hint that you reject my offer?

MASSINISSA

I will not hint it, Syphax, I will say it;
I choose to keep the kingdom of Numidia,
I choose to keep our pact with Rome, but most
Of all I choose to hold as something sacred
The trust of those who love me as their king.

SYPHAX

Is this the answer I shall bear to Carthage?

MASSINISSA

I have said it.

SYPHAX

Farewell, Massinissa,
Strange things have happened in the world, and you
May yet behold the beautiful Sophonisba
Beside you as your bride and as your queen.

[*He and his attendants back out right bowing.*]

MASSINISSA

Farewell, Syphax, poor prophet and poor prince.

CASINTHA

Woe unto us if he is half a prophet.

MASSINISSA

Think not of that. The present is still with us,
So let the future wait its turn. And now
Let all rejoice our enemy has gone.

ROSIOBA

[*Happily.*]
Let all rejoice! Let every one rejoice!

[*The guards stand aside and members of* MASSINISSA'S *court enter. Suddenly there is a hush, the crowd at the right entrance separates and a messenger enters hurriedly and kneels before* MASSINISSA.]

MESSENGER

Your majesty, an envoy comes from Rome.

MASSINISSA

From Rome?

MESSENGER

Yes, Sire.

MASSINISSA

Then lead him here to me.
Allow no envoy of our noble ally to be kept waiting.

[*The messenger hurries out right.*]

MASSINISSA

Friatus!

FRIATUS

[*An old bearded man, advancing.*]
Yes, Sire.

MASSINISSA

Come closer, Friatus, I shall need your wisdom;
I know not what this means. You know the Romans.

FRIATUS

Did you expect a messenger from Rome?

MASSINISSA

No, Scipio seldom sends envoys so far.

FRIATUS

Then we must wait and learn what word he brings.
[*The crowd at the right parts and an envoy enters accompanied by an aide.*]

ENVOY

[*Kneeling.*]
Hail, Massinissa, Great Numidian king!

MASSINISSA

We gladly welcome all who come from Rome.

ENVOY

[*Rising.*]
I bring a word from Scipio Africanus.

MASSINISSA

[*Rising suddenly and speaking excitedly.*]
From Africanus! Who is Africanus?

ENVOY

[*Seeing his error.*]
I come from Rome. Scipio of Rome dispatched me.

MASSINISSA

[*Sharply.*]
Scipio I know as ally and as friend!
I know no Africanus! There is none!
What message do you bring?

ENVOY

It's under seal.

[*The envoy hands* MASSINISSA *a rolled sheet which he reads. After reading he hands the sheet to* FRIATUS.]

MASSINISSA

Read this, Friatus, and put your wisdom to it.
[*To the* ENVOY.]
How long has it been since you left Roman soil?

ENVOY

Two suns ago I set foot in Numidia.

MASSINISSA

And all is well at Rome?

ENVOY

All is well, Sire.

MASSINISSA

An answer to your message will be ready
Before the night fall.
[*To an attendant.*]
Show our ally out
And to a place where he may rest in comfort.
[*The attendant leads the* ENVOY *and his aide away.*]

MASSINISSA

[*To his court.*]
This message is advice from Scipio
That I wed Sophonisba.

ROSIOBA

Woe to us!
[*There is a hum of disapproval from all present.*]

CASINTHA

And why should Scipio send so strange a message?

MASSINISSA

[*Sitting. He is perplexed.*]
It puzzles me. What do you think, Friatus?

FRIATUS

[*Shaking his head slowly.*]
It is a strange request. Too strange, too strange.

MASSINISSA

And I must think on it before I answer.

FRIATUS

Think on it long and answer carefully.

MASSINISSA

[*To the Princesses.*]
And what say you, Casintha, Rosioba?

CASINTHA

[*Sorrowfully.*]
You are the heart of our Numidia.

ROSIOBA

Numidia needs her king but does not need
The pale, white Sophonisba.

MASSINISSA

[*Half to himself.*]
Africanus!
There is no Africanus, and still this man
Called Scipio Africanus. Why was that?

FRIATUS

Can any man on earth be Africanus
Unless you will it?

MASSINISSA

None unless I will it.

FRIATUS

Perhaps it's Scipio's hope, this Africanus.

MASSINISSA

Scipio would never speak so prematurely.

FRIATUS

This envoy, Sire, did you observe him closely?

MASSINISSA

No, not too closely. What did you observe?

FRIATUS

On the forefinger of his weaker hand
He wears a ring.

MASSINISSA

[*Leaning forward with great interest.*]
What kind of ring, Friatus?

FRIATUS

A rare circle of gold set with a jewel,
Such a ring as I have seen only in Carthage
And West Numidia.

MASSINISSA

[*Eagerly.*]
In Syphax's country?
What do you draw from that? He is not Roman?

FRIATUS

He is not Roman if I am not Roman,
And I am African.

MASSINISSA

[*Fiercely.*]
An impostor, then!

FRIATUS

He said he came from Rome.

MASSINISSA

Do you believe him?

FRIATUS

[*Shaking his head.*]
Scipio would send only a Roman here.

MASSINISSA

[*Very angrily.*]
And he said Africanus, but he lies!
There is no Africanus!

FRIATUS

There is none, Sire.

MASSINISSA

And shall be none unless I will it so!

FRIATUS

It may be that this lying envoy knows
That Scipio hopes to be called Africanus,
And knows that you and Scipio now are friends
Who would join hands to conquer Africa.
Knowing these things he thought that if he gave
Your friend of Rome the name he hopes to have
You would be pleased.

MASSINISSA

But I am far from pleased.

FRIATUS

And what of him who said he came from Rome?

MASSINISSA

That messenger who called himself an envoy,
Who called the fateful name of Africanus,
Shall talk for me again!

FRIATUS

And we shall watch him;
Most likely he has come at Syphax's bidding.

MASSINISSA

Or Hasdrubal's.

FRIATUS

The thing was all prepared.
If Syphax failed to win you with his words,
Then this man should pretend to come from Rome
With a request from Scipio that you wed
The Princess Sophonisba for the sake
Of peace in Africa.

MASSINISSA

But he has failed.
A ring upon his finger and a word
Upon his tongue has ruined his clever plan.

[*The Numidian messenger enters again.*]

MASSINISSA

[*As the* MESSENGER *kneels.*]
What now? Has our false messenger escaped?

MESSENGER

Your majesty, an envoy comes from Rome.

MASSINISSA

Another comes from Rome! Rome reeks with envoys!

FRIATUS

Two messengers?

MASSINISSA

[*To the* MESSENGER.]
Let him be brought to me.

FRIATUS

Would Scipio send two envoys in one day?

MASSINISSA

We shall see, Friatus, we shall see.
Watch the forefinger of his weaker hand;
I'll watch his lips, his hair, his eyes, his color;
I'll watch him everywhere, but most of all
I'll listen to his voice for Africanus.

ROMAN

[*Entering accompanied by an aide. He kneels.*]
Hail, Massinissa, friend of Rome and Romans,
I bring good will to the Numidian King!

MASSINISSA

[*Looking at him closely.*]
Good will to all who come from Rome as Romans,
But death to all impostors!

ROMAN

[*Rising, puzzled.*]
All impostors?

MASSINISSA

To all who come as Romans but are not Romans.

ROMAN

I come to you with greetings from Scipio.

MASSINISSA

You come from Scipio or from Africanus?

ROMAN

From Scipio, Sire, I know no Africanus.

MASSINISSA

What message were you told to bring from Rome?

ROMAN

I bring a word of friendship and good will
From Scipio to you.

MASSINISSA

Were you alone?
Did Scipio send a messenger before you?

ROMAN

No, Sire, no one but me has come from Rome.

MASSINISSA

One came who said he came direct from Rome;
He called the name of Scipio Africanus.

ROMAN

I know not of him.

MASSINISSA

[*Pointing suddenly to the* ROMAN.]
Look on this man, Friatus,
Is he a Roman?

FRIATUS

[*Looking closely.*]
He is like a Roman.

MASSINISSA

The first who came, how would he look to you
If paired with this one?

FRIATUS

As I said before
Not like a Roman I have ever seen.

MASSINISSA

[*To the* ROMAN.]
You'd know a Roman if you saw him here?

ROMAN

I'd know one if I saw him anywhere.

MASSINISSA

[*To* FRIATUS.]
Friatus, order in that other one
Who claims he came so recently from Rome.
[FRIATUS *bows and goes out right.*]

ROMAN

When did this other come, your majesty?

MASSINISSA

His footprints are still clear upon the sand,
Who brought the message Scipio never sent.

ROMAN

Impostors die when they make sport with Rome.

MASSINISSA

Numidia is sometimes merciful
To them, but to their masters she is cold.

ROMAN

Who is his master? Is it Hasdrubal?

MASSINISSA

Syphax or Hasdrubal I do not know;
We'll let him tell.

CASINTHA

A scheme of Syphax, Sire,
His plans are deep.

MASSINISSA

And sometimes very dark;
But they shall be laid bare before the world.

ROMAN

Shall Scipio know of this, your majesty?

MASSINISSA

Yes, all of it. And by it he will know
The hour is ripe to strike.
[*To* FRIATUS *who returns.*]
What of our spy?

FRIATUS

He comes.

MASSINISSA

Has he a hint of what has happened?

FRIATUS

He seems quite unaware of anything.

MASSINISSA

We'll keep him unaware and let him walk
Blindly into our net, and when he's there
We may by chance learn who his master is.

ROSIOBA

[*Looking towards the right.*]
He's coming now.

MASSINISSA

Watch closely, Friatus, watch!

[*There is a slight pause until the* ENVOY *enters from the right.*]

ENVOY

I am at the service of your majesty.

MASSINISSA

You say you came from Scipio Africanus?

ENVOY

Yes, Sire.

MASSINISSA

And are you Roman?

ENVOY

Roman, Sire.

MASSINISSA

[*Pointing to the* ROMAN.]
What know you of the Roman standing there?

ENVOY

[*Starting, then looking at the* ROMAN *closely.*]
I do not know him, Sire.

MASSINISSA

That is strange.
You do not know a Roman when you see one?

ENVOY

Not him, your majesty.

MASSINISSA

Since you arrived
This Roman came direct from Scipio.
From whom did you come?

ENVOY

I, too, came from Scipio.

MASSINISSA

[*Speaking fiercely and pointing to the* ENVOY'S *left hand.*]
On the forefinger of your weaker hand
You wear a ring. Did that, too, come from Rome?
[*The* ENVOY *starts as if struck and quickly closes his left hand.*]

ENVOY

It was a present to me, majesty.

MASSINISSA

[*Thundering.*]
From Hasdrubal or Syphax or from whom?

ENVOY

From one I served.

MASSINISSA

How long ago and where?

ENVOY

At Rome—

MASSINISSA

[*Warning him.*]
Beware! A lie means death to you!

FRIATUS

I have not seen a ring like that at Rome.

MASSINISSA

[*To the* ROMAN.]
Is it a Roman ring?

ROMAN

I have not seen it.

MASSINISSA

[*Pointing to the* ENVOY.]
Look there upon his hand, the weaker one,
And tell us if such rings are given at Rome
For deeds of service.

ROMAN

[*Going to the* ENVOY.]
Let me see your hand.
[*The* ENVOY *makes no move to show his hand.*]

MASSINISSA

[*To the* ENVOY.]
Hold out your hand to him if you would live!
[*The* ENVOY *holds out his hand and the* ROMAN *looks at the ring closely.*]

ROMAN

[*Turning to* MASSINISSA.]
Such rings as that are never given at Rome
For service or in friendship.

MASSINISSA

[*To the* ENVOY.]
What say you?

ENVOY

I have no more to say.

MASSINISSA

Then you will tell
By whom 'twas given, when and for what service.
[*The* ENVOY *seems to be trying to speak but the words hang in his mouth.*]
Numidia is harsher with their masters
Than with impostors! Whom do you obey?

ENVOY

My lips are sealed.

MASSINISSA

How shall they be unsealed,
By threatened death, by torture or by worse?

ROSIOBA

[*In a pitying tone.*]
What's worse than torture, Sire? Nothing is worse
Than torture.

MASSINISSA

To be kept with food and drink
Just out of reach and starving night and day;
To be thrown into a dungeon filled with snakes,
Raped of their fangs, and kept there till one feels
Akin to snakes; these may be something worse,
I do not know; but they have loosened tongues.
[*Turning to the* ENVOY *again.*]
Who may your master be?

ENVOY

My lips are sealed.

ROMAN

In Rome we could unseal them easily.

MASSINISSA

Take this spy away and punish him
Until he screams his horror to the skies,
Or tells his master's name; and if this fails
Cast him into the dungeon filled with snakes
And leave him shackled there!
[*The spy is hustled out.*]

ROMAN

Your majesty,
What if he does not scream, but dies in silence?

MASSINISSA

He'll die in silence only if his blood
Is ancient African of stronger stock;
But if he comes of serfs, low born and bred,
You'll hear his scream at the first touch of pain.

FRIATUS

Had he been born of ancient Africans
With the proud blood of princes in his veins,
He would have been a warrior, not a spy.

MASSINISSA

Then we may listen for his whimperings
And for his screams. Is it not so, Friatus?

FRIATUS

Yes, Sire.

[*Suddenly two terrible screams are heard from the right.*]

MASSINISSA

[*Rising.*]

Ah! His screams betray his blood!
Now we shall learn to whom he kneels, and who
Commanded him to masquerade as Roman!

SOLDIER

[*Rushing in.*]

Your majesty, we have his master's name!

MASSINISSA

What is it called? Syphax or Hasdrubal?

SOLDIER

The prince of West Numidia! Syphax, Sire!

MASSINISSA

I should have known it! Hold your prisoner!
[*To the* ROMAN *after the* SOLDIER *goes.*]
You hasten back to Rome! Tell Scipio
The hour is ripe to strike if we shall rule
In Africa!

ROMAN

Farewell, your majesty,
Scipio shall know the hour is ripe to strike.
[*He and his aide back out bowing.*]

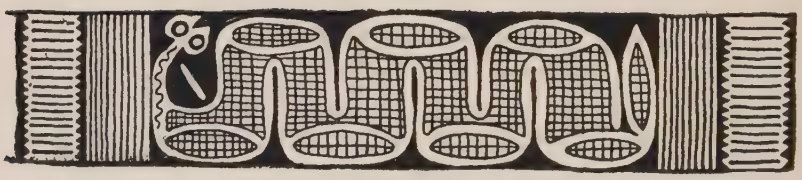
MASSINISSA

[*To his court.*]
Now shall we rule Africa, Rome and I!
Africa shall be ours! The time is ripe!
Rejoice!

ALL

Rejoice! Africa shall be ours!

CURTAIN



# THE KING'S DILEMMA

A Play in One Act

by

Willis Richardson

Adapted to the capacity of children of the eighth grade.

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## CHARACTERS

The King
The Chamberlain
The Physician
Nyanza, *the prince*
Zanzibo, *the prince's black playmate*
The Queen
The queen's attendants, the prince's playmates, sentinels.

Time—The future.
Place—The last kingdom of the world.

Permission for the performance of this play must be obtained from the author, Willis Richardson, 2023 13th St., N. W., Washington, D. C.

# THE KING'S DILEMMA

A Play

By Willis Richardson

*When the curtain rises we see a great high-ceilinged hall. At the right is a dais upon which are three chairs—one large and high-backed with one smaller chair at each side of it. This room is sometimes used as a reception hall and sometimes the* King *sits here and judges the affairs of his subjects. In the center of the rear wall is an arched doorway. At each side of this doorway a sentinel marches to and fro. For a while they march to and fro in silence, but they soon become weary of this and begin to talk.*

FIRST SENTINEL

[*Stopping.*]
The place is dreary since the Prince has gone.

SECOND SENTINEL

[*Stopping.*]
He has not gone.

FIRST SENTINEL

I mean since he goes out so often.

SECOND SENTINEL

His going out all day has been food for his health.

FIRST SENTINEL

Where does he go?

SECOND SENTINEL

To play.

FIRST SENTINEL

I know he goes to play and playing has made him a robust fellow; but where does he play?

SECOND SENTINEL

He plays in the castle gardens out of sight of any one looking from the castle windows. To see him one must go without the gates and walk as far as the ivy-covered wall and look to the left.

FIRST SENTINEL

Does the King go there?

SECOND SENTINEL

No.

FIRST SENTINEL

You speak as if you are quite sure of it.

SECOND SENTINEL

I know a secret.

FIRST SENTINEL

A secret about whom?

SECOND SENTINEL

About the Prince's playing.

FIRST SENTINEL

What do you know?

SECOND SENTINEL

The Prince plays with boys.

FIRST SENTINEL

Boys!

SECOND SENTINEL

Urchins.

FIRST SENTINEL

But the King has ever forbidden that.

SECOND SENTINEL

I know. I said it was a secret.

FIRST SENTINEL

The Chamberlain has orders from the King.

SECOND SENTINEL

And the King has ordered him to obey the Prince.

FIRST SENTINEL

What if the King's orders and the Prince's orders conflict?

SECOND SENTINEL

Then the Chamberlain must use whatever judgment he has to bring them into harmony.

FIRST SENTINEL

What of these boys? How do they enter the outside gates of the garden?

SECOND SENTINEL

The Chamberlain lets them in at the Prince's orders.

FIRST SENTINEL

But if the King should learn?

SECOND SENTINEL

Then the Chamberlain must justify his acts as best he can.

FIRST SENTINEL

[*Raising a warning hand.*]
Some one comes.

[*They resume their march to and fro.*]

[*The* KING *enters followed by the* CHAMBERLAIN. *Although it is in future times the* KING *is dressed in the royal robes of the ancient Kings.*]

THE KING

[*To the* CHAMBERLAIN.]
I must commend you for your good care of the Prince. His health has improved wonderfully.

THE CHAMBERLAIN

It was my duty, Sire.

THE KING

And you have ever been faithful to your duty. The Physician is on his way here after a year's travel in foreign lands. He will wish to know with what success his plans have been followed concerning the Prince's health. He will commend you. Others advised that the Prince be allowed to go among the common children, but we find that playing alone in the castle grounds was good.

THE CHAMBERLAIN

Yes, Sire.

THE KING

Do not leave my side while he is here, and you shall hear his story of other lands where monarchies have fallen

and there are no kings, of wild unreasonable places where no one rules but a band of serfs.

THE CHAMBERLAIN

How do serfs rule? Their business is but to obey.

THE KING

Well said. Then you shall hear of their misrule. And when this man of medicine has gone I shall reward you for your great part in helping to bring back the Prince's health.

THE CHAMBERLAIN

Sire, a thousand thanks.

THE KING

If this Physician's story of other lands is one of discontent and unhappiness, then, this, the latest kingdom of the world, should increase in power, and increasing, last forever.

THE CHAMBERLAIN

I see no reason why it should not last.

THE KING

Send a messenger to learn if the Physician has come; and if he has come have him directed here.

[*The* KING *sits.*]

[*The* CHAMBERLAIN *goes to the archway, claps his hands for a messenger, and gives the order.*]

THE KING

[*As the* CHAMBERLAIN *returns.*]

I am most anxious about these other countries. If all their plans succeed our kingdom may be doomed.

THE CHAMBERLAIN

They cannot succeed, Sire. The lower orders will never learn to rule.

THE KING

I know it. I know it well; and still I fear.

[*The* PHYSICIAN *enters. He is too democratic to kneel. In fact, all classes have lost much of their servility in these days.*]

THE KING

Welcome to our kingdom, the last of the world.

THE PHYSICIAN

[*Bowing.*]

It is good, Sire, to see you so alive, so strong and healthy.

THE KING

Good health is the blessing of my line.

THE PHYSICIAN

For that reason I knew the Prince would be himself again. He has improved?

THE KING

More than my fondest dreams could picture him.

THE PHYSICIAN

Then I am well rewarded.

THE KING

You must see him.

THE PHYSICIAN

I wish to, Sire.

THE KING

[*To the* CHAMBERLAIN.]
Have the Prince hailed before me.

THE CHAMBERLAIN

I would go for him, Sire.

THE KING

No, have him hailed. I wish you here.

[*The* CHAMBERLAIN *goes to the archway and gives a messenger orders to have the* PRINCE *brought before the* KING.]

THE KING

[*To the* PHYSICIAN.]
How found you the rest of the world?

THE PHYSICIAN

The rest of the world is happy beyond all dreams of happiness.

THE KING

You mean the people rule with some success?

THE PHYSICIAN

With all success, Sire.

THE KING

But wars and discord should keep them unsuccessful.

THE PHYSICIAN

They have no wars.

THE KING

[*In surprise.*]
No wars!

THE PHYSICIAN

They know that they must fight the wars themselves, so they have no wars.

THE KING

[*Sadly.*]
If what you say is true, my kingdom surely cannot last forever.

THE PHYSICIAN

I fear not, Sire.

THE KING

I notice even here there is some discontent; the people talking of equality and hearing things from abroad.

THE PHYSICIAN

Your kingdom may last long, it may fall soon.

THE KING

If it but last my reign—

THE PHYSICIAN

And of your son, the Prince?

THE KING

The boy is young. He can remold himself to the ways of the world.

THE PHYSICIAN

Yes, youth can endure the change better than age.

THE KING

I sadden when I think of the state of the world. The people forgetting authority, forgetting the difference between King and slave, not knowing prince from menial.

THE PHYSICIAN

The Utopia of which they preached has come.

THE KING

And what Utopia do they preach of now?

THE PHYSICIAN

They say they will enjoy these new worlds for a while, then think of the future.

[*There is a great noise heard in the hallway.*]

THE KING

[*Turning.*]

What noise is this?

[*As the* CHAMBERLAIN *starts to the doorway, the* PRINCE, *a boy of twelve, enters followed by four or five boys of similar age. They are all ragged and dirty.*]

THE KING

[*Rises.*]

What can this mean?

THE PRINCE

You wished me, Sire?

THE KING

[*In angry tones.*]

Must I pick out the Prince from all this rabble? What means it, Chamberlain?

THE CHAMBERLAIN

I know not, Sire. I was commanded to remain with you.

THE PRINCE

These are my friends.

THE KING

Friends!

THE PRINCE

Yes, Sire.

THE KING

[*To the* CHAMBERLAIN.]
Were you commanded that he play alone?

THE CHAMBERLAIN

Yes, Sire.

THE KING

Friendship does not become full grown in an hour. What means it? You ignored my commands?

THE CHAMBERLAIN

Sire, you commanded; and in all things I obey you. But you also commanded that I obey the Prince; and the Prince commanded that I open the garden gates.

THE KING

[*To the* PRINCE.]
Is this true?

THE PRINCE

Yes, Sire.

THE KING

Did I not say it was uncomely to mingle with inferiors?

THE PRINCE

They are my equals.

THE KING

Equals! Have I lived to hear equality preached by a prince of my own blood?

THE PRINCE

They have proved it, Sire.

THE KING

How proved themselves your equals?

THE PRINCE

[*Indicating a black boy.*]
Zanzibo can throw me to the ground, but I can beat him in a race. [*Indicating another boy.*] This boy can cast a stone farther than I, but I outswim him. [*Pointing to another boy.*] That boy, the other black one standing there, can climb to the summit of the highest tree while I climb half the height.

THE KING

[*Impatiently.*]
But of your blood! Why speak of these mean things? What of your blood?

THE PRINCE

We tried that, Sire. Each of us pricked himself with a needle's point and gave one drop of blood upon a parchment. Then walking at a distance turned again to where the parchment lay, but could not tell one drop of blood from the other.

THE KING

How long has this been going on?

THE PRINCE

Since I began to play.

THE KING

Then it must stop at once.

THE PRINCE

I will not play without them.

THE KING

Do you not know that every moment you play with them you lose a certain measure of their respect?

THE PRINCE

I will not play if they are taken from me.

THE PHYSICIAN

Sire, the Prince must play or his health will fall to what it was before.

THE KING

Then he must play alone.

THE PRINCE

I will not.

THE KING

I'll throw you into chains.

THE PRINCE

Humiliate a prince of your own house?

THE KING

[*After pondering.*]

I'll compromise. I still remember that a prince of the blood is above the punishment we give to menials. Choose one of these as playmate and let the others go.

THE PRINCE

And may this one remain within the castle?

THE KING

Yes.

THE PRINCE

[*Putting his hand on the shoulder of the black boy who stands beside him.*]
Then I choose Zanzibo.

THE KING

What! Choosing a black?

THE PRINCE

He is my friend.

THE KING

Choose you a white one.

THE PRINCE

You said choose one. You said not black or white, and I have chosen.

THE KING

Will you cross me in all things?

THE PRINCE

Zanzibo is my friend. We love each other.

THE KING

[*After pondering a moment.*]
Chamberlain, take those two away, clean them and dress them in the finest garments and bring them back as quickly as you can. Send these others out and have it announced to the Queen that the King would see her here.

[*The* CHAMBERLAIN *and all the boys go out.*] This new idea is flying through the world; the pauper thinks himself the prince's equal. The black and white have come too close together. It must be stopped.

THE PHYSICIAN

Nothing can stop it, Sire; the world is wild with new ideas.

THE KING

And he even chose a black for his companion.

THE PHYSICIAN

Blacks have been kings of the world in other days.

THE KING

That's where the trouble comes. They are too numerous, too dangerous, they may usurp the power of the world again.

THE PHYSICIAN

The power of the world belongs to all the people, and no one race shall rule the world again.

THE KING

I have a plan that will subdue the Prince, will make him spurn that black.

THE PHYSICIAN

A new idea—

THE KING

The Queen comes.

[*The* QUEEN *and two ladies have entered. The* KING *and* PHYSICIAN *bow.*]

THE QUEEN

Sire, you wished me here?

THE KING

I am in a dilemma.

THE QUEEN

What puzzles the King?

THE KING

The Prince has chosen a black boy for his companion and will not play without him.

THE QUEEN

Why must he have a companion?

THE KING

He will not play without one.

THE PHYSICIAN

And play is necessary to his health.

THE KING

I have a plan that will settle that.

THE QUEEN

What plans the King?

[*The* KING *goes up to the large chair and sits.*]

THE KING

In all my years of rule one thing I learned and learned as thoroughly as I learned the book, and it is this: Kings and Princes and those of higher blood hate others who

rise up from lower classes to be their equals, nor do they love too much equals in their own class.

THE QUEEN

And what of this?

THE KING

On this I'll base my plan to outwit the Prince. He chose that black boy, now I'll promise him to let the boy stay if he will agree to have the boy made equal unto him, a prince of these domains.

THE QUEEN

[*In surprise.*]
A black prince!

THE KING

A black prince if he will, but our Nyanza will tire of this unreal equality when he sees one rising from far below to share his power.

THE QUEEN

I do not like the plan. Suppose Nyanza willingly accepts him. You say a strange idea is in the world and strange ideas are appealing to the young. If he is once accepted you cannot break your promise. The King's promise cannot be broken.

THE KING

It cannot fail. The law runs through all nature. The Prince looks down on the man, the man on what's lower than he is on down to the toad that looks upon the snake as his inferior.

THE QUEEN

I do not like the plan.

THE KING

It cannot fail. Watch when I state it how Nyanza spurns the black. [NYANZA *and* ZANZIBO *return followed by the* CHAMBERLAIN. *Both are dressed in the finest garments and the black boy looks equally as princely as the white. They stand before the* KING.]
Chamberlain, you have done well.

[*To the* PRINCE.]
When you, Nyanza, chose this boy your friend a plan occurred to me. The nation is one-fifth black and I am old. Now if you love the boy as friend and equal I promise to make him a prince equal to you in power, and at my death ruler of half the kingdom.

THE PRINCE

[*In surprise.*]
Sire, is this a promise?

THE KING

[*Thinking he has gained his point.*]
I speak it from my heart, and the King's promise cannot be broken.

THE PRINCE

[*To his friend.*]
What say you, Zanzibo?

ZANZIBO

I say that if the King so honors me, my whole life shall be given to the task and all the effort within human power will I extend to fill the place with honor.

THE PRINCE

Well said. [*To the* KING.] Now, Sire, I like your terms and I accept!

THE KING

[*Startled.*]
You accept!

THE PRINCE

Yes, Sire.

THE KING

You accept as equal that boy standing there?

THE PRINCE

According to the terms of your promise, Sire.

THE KING

[*Rising.*]
Have you thought, Nyanza? This makes him a prince and equal unto you in all things.

THE PRINCE

Sire, I accept your terms.

THE KING

And you hold me to my promise?

THE PRINCE

The King's promise cannot be broken.

THE KING

[*Stepping down in anger.*]
You balk me at every turn. A black shall not rule in this kingdom.

THE PRINCE

The King's promise cannot be broken.

THE QUEEN

I said at first I did not like the plan.

THE KING

[*Trembling with anger.*]

Chamberlain, help me out. [*The* CHAMBERLAIN *assists the* KING *to the door where the* KING *stops and turns, pointing his trembling finger at his son.*]

Undutiful son, you shall have your fill of this equality. I said a black should never rule in this kingdom. The King's promise cannot be broken. At the coming midnight and forever after, this shall be no more a kingdom. The power shall go into the hands of the people. Now glory in your equals!

[*He goes out.*]

THE PRINCE

[*Pleased.*]

This last decree is better than the first. At last the people will be happy.

[*He and* ZANZIBO *join hands as the others go out.*]

CURTAIN

# THE HOUSE OF SHAM

A Play

by

Willis Richardson

Adapted to the capacity of students in high school and college.

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## CHARACTERS

JOHN COOPER, *a real estate dealer*
MRS. COOPER
ENID, *their daughter*
JOYCE ADAMS, *Enid's cousin*
DR. BILL HOLLAND
HAL FORD
DORSEY

Permission for the performance of this play must be obtained from the author, Willis Richardson, 2023 13th St., N. W., Washington, D. C.

# THE HOUSE OF SHAM

A Play — By Willis Richardson

*The house of* Cooper *is that of a well-to-do colored family, and the room we see is what might be called a reception room. At the right is a door which leads outside and above and below this respectively stand a desk and a chair. Directly in front of us at the upper end of the room is a bay window from which the street can be seen by those in the room. On the left side of the room is a mantel below which is a fireplace. In front of the mantel stand two comfortable chairs and other comfortable seats are about the room. At the present moment* Mrs. Cooper, Enid, Joyce *and* Bill Holland *are visible.* Bill *and* Enid *are about to go motoring. A door at left leads to other parts of the house.*

BILL

[*As they are about to go.*]
Don't you want to take a spin around the block with us?

Mrs. Cooper

[*Who is the only one sitting.*]
No, thanks, Doctor, I haven't long come in. I'm very tired.

BILL

[*To* Joyce.]
How about you, Joyce?

JOYCE

No, I guess not. I thank you just the same.

ENID

[*Who is not overanxious for a third party.*]
Expecting any one, Joyce?

JOYCE

[*Adjusting* ENID'S *collar.*]
Not exactly.

ENID

But if any one comes you mean to be here, don't you?

JOYCE

Yes, but I don't exactly expect any one.

BILL

Is that why you won't go with us, because you don't exactly expect any one?

JOYCE

No, that's not it.

BILL

What is it, then? Honestly, now?

ENID

Let her alone, Bill; can't you see she's got a secret?

JOYCE

[*Smiling.*]
You know I'm too young to have secrets, Enid.

BILL

[*Throwing up his hands in mock despair.*]
That settles it; come on, Enid.

ENID

[*Putting her arm around* JOYCE.]
The younger they are the more secrets they have these days, dear; now tell us who it is, what it is, when and why and how.

JOYCE

You don't want to know much, do you?

MRS. COOPER

Let Joyce alone and go on for your ride. How long do you mean to be gone?

BILL

We won't be gone many minutes. We hope to pick Mr. Cooper up on our way back.

ENID

[*Lingering.*]
I've just got to learn what this child is all aflutter about.

JOYCE

But I'm not all aflutter.

MRS. COOPER

Don't tell her a thing, Joyce.

ENID

Do you know what it is, Mama?

MRS. COOPER

I have an idea.

ENID

[*Going to her mother.*]
Whisper it to me.

MRS. COOPER

No, I won't.

ENID

Well, I'll get the idea when I come back.

[*She and* BILL *go out.*]

MRS. COOPER

I think I know your secret, Joyce.

JOYCE

[*Turning to her quickly.*]

Which secret?

MRS. COOPER

How many have you?

JOYCE

I didn't say I had any.

MRS. COOPER

Oh, but you have; and it's about you and Hal.

JOYCE

[*Feigning innocence.*]

Hal?

MRS. COOPER

Now don't try to fool an old woman. Every woman knows when another one is in love.

JOYCE

[*Confused.*]

But—Hal—you know Hal—

MRS. COOPER

[*Rising.*]
Yes, I know. I understand perfectly. Come here to the window a minute. I want to show you something. [*She and* JOYCE *go up to the window.*]
Don't Enid and the doctor make a fine looking couple?

JOYCE

Yes, they do. And here comes Hal down the street. He'll just miss them.

MRS. COOPER

To miss them is just what he wants to do, I'll bet.

JOYCE

He sees them, though. See how he's watching the car.

MRS. COOPER

[*Pointing.*]
I wonder who that man is?

JOYCE

The one walking up and down?

MRS. COOPER

Yes; and holding his hand in his pocket. He's been walking up and down there for the last hour.

JOYCE

I suppose he's waiting for some one.

MRS. COOPER

But he always looks up at this house.

JOYCE

If he wanted to see any one in here he'd come in, wouldn't he?

MRS. COOPER

I don't know. There's so many rascals about nowadays a person can hardly tell what to think.

JOYCE

Ask Hal about him.

MRS. COOPER

That's what I mean to do as soon as he comes in.

JOYCE

[*Turning from the window.*]
I'll go in and read my magazine while you talk to him.

MRS. COOPER

Don't you want to talk to him?

JOYCE

[*Blushing.*]
Yes, but—yes, I'll see him later.

MRS. COOPER

Oh, you want to see him alone. I'll send him to you.
[*The bell rings and* MRS. COOPER *goes to the door while* JOYCE *goes out left.*]

HAL

[*Entering.*]
Good evening.

MRS. COOPER

[*Closing the door.*]
Well, Hal, how're you this evening?

HAL

Fair. [*He looks about and sees that no one else is present.*] All alone?

MRS. COOPER

[*Indicating the other room.*]
Joyce is in there reading. [*Looking at him closely.*] You look worried. Is there anything wrong?

HAL

I acknowledge I am a little worried, and I'm glad you're alone. I want to talk to you—ask your advice about something.

MRS. COOPER

Why so serious?

HAL

It's a serious matter.

MRS. COOPER

[*Sitting.*]
Well, take a cigarette and tell me the sad news.

HAL

[*Taking a cigarette from his pocket and lighting it.*]
It's not serious that way. It's about Enid and me.

MRS. COOPER

[*Enlightened.*]
Oh, I see.

HAL

You know we've been—I've been taking up a great amount of her time, and now I think it's only right for me to—

MRS. COOPER

[*Kindly.*]

There isn't any use going any further, Hal; I understand what you would say. You think it's your duty to propose to Enid and you want my consent. Well, you know I'm your friend, but I'm not going to give my consent to that because I know you're in love with Joyce, and I know Dr. Holland is in love with Enid. Now, aren't you in love with Joyce?

HAL

You're frank with me, so I'll be frank with you. There isn't any doubt that I think a great deal of her.

MRS. COOPER

I knew it. It's hard to fool a woman about being in love; and especially an old woman like me.

HAL

I wouldn't try to fool you.

MRS. COOPER

I hope not. Now to be more frank with you. I like you very much, Hal; better than I do Dr. Bill, but I could hardly give my consent to a marriage between you and Enid even if things were different from what they are.

HAL

[*Puzzled.*]

You mean even if we were in love with each other?

MRS. COOPER

That's just it.

HAL

Why?

MRS. COOPER

One simple reason: Because you don't make money enough. And what Enid will need most of all will be money. You couldn't begin to take care of her, but Dr. Bill can. You see, he's a doctor and has prospects of making plenty of money. I hope you understand me, Hal.

HAL

[*Relieved.*]
Yes, I understand you, and I'm glad things haven't gone any further than they have.

MRS. COOPER

Well, that's settled and I hope we'll be just as good friends as we ever were.

HAL

We will, you bet we will.

MRS. COOPER

[*Rising.*]
I'm glad you take it that way. You've always been a darling. Now I think I'll go and take a little rest and let you and Joyce talk to each other until Enid and Bill come back.

HAL

Is Mr. Cooper in?

MRS. COOPER

No, he hasn't come in yet—by the way, did you notice a man walking up and down in front of the house?

HAL

I saw Dorsey outside as I came in.

MRS. COOPER

[*Puzzled.*]
Dorsey? Who is Dorsey?

HAL

He's a man who claims Mr. Cooper owes him five hundred dollars.

MRS. COOPER

Look out here and see if you're talking about the same man I am. [*They go to the window.*] That man there with his hand in his pocket—is he the one?

HAL

Yes, that's Dorsey.

MRS. COOPER

It's a business deal, is it?

HAL

Yes, he had us buy a house for him.

MRS. COOPER

Then he ought to settle it at the office and not come hanging around here. He makes me nervous the way he carries his hand in his pocket.

HAL

Don't worry about him, it'll be settled all right.

MRS. COOPER

I hope so. I don't like to have people like that around. He seems to have a gun or something in his pocket.

HAL

He seems to be in a tight place too.

MRS. COOPER

A tight place?

HAL

Yes; he's out of a job and his wife's been sick for some time.

MRS. COOPER

I suppose he holds us responsible for that too.

HAL

I don't know; but if it were left to me, I'd settle with him and let him go.

MRS. COOPER

Then John really owes him?

HAL

That's what he claims. Of course, it's a matter of business and there are two sides to it.

MRS. COOPER

[*Going towards the left door.*]

I'll talk to John about it as soon as he comes in. That man gives me the shivers. Now, I'll send Joyce in and take a few minutes rest.

[*She goes out through the hall.* HAL *paces the floor a few moments until* JOYCE *appears.*]

HAL

[*Taking her hands.*]

Oh, there you are. I had begun to think I wouldn't have the pleasure of seeing you.

JOYCE

I was coming in as soon as you finished telling Aunt Edna how much you wanted to marry Enid.

HAL

You know better than that. I wanted to tell her how much more I care for you than I ever did for Enid, but she seemed to know it before I could tell her and paired us off—you and me, Enid and Bill.

JOYCE

What will Enid think after all the time you two spent together before I came here and before Bill started coming around so regularly?

HAL

Enid will just love it. What girl wouldn't be glad to get a promising young physician these days?

JOYCE

I suppose you could find one or two who wouldn't.

HAL

For instance?

JOYCE

I, for one, wouldn't be overjoyed.

HAL

[*Putting his arm around her.*]
I'm glad of that, because I've just been told that I'm not good enough for Enid; but I'm just the one for you.

JOYCE

Did Aunt Edna say that?

HAL

Words to that effect. What do you say?

JOYCE

[*Smiling.*]
Well, you're not a promising young physician, you know.

HAL

I'm glad I'm not, if you think that way about it. [*He draws her close, and just as they are about to kiss there is a loud ring of the bell.* HAL *is disappointed.*] I could kick the one who did that!

[JOYCE *goes to the door and opens it, then starts back, for* DORSEY *is standing there with his hand in his pocket as usual.*]

DORSEY

Good evenin'.

HAL

[*Who has moved forward.*]
Oh, it's you, is it, Dorsey?

DORSEY

Yes, young feller, it's me. Where's your boss?

HAL

He's not in yet.

DORSEY

[*Turning to* JOYCE.]
When will your Pa be in?

HAL

That's not his daughter.

DORSEY

Oh, excuse me for tryin' to make you kin to a rat like John Cooper.

JOYCE

[*Resentfully.*]
But I am kin to him. He's my uncle.

DORSEY

[*To* HAL.]
Is his wife in?

HAL

Yes, but I don't believe she wants to be disturbed.

DORSEY

Well, Ah've got to see somebody. Ah've waited long enough and this thing's got to be settled this evenin'. [*To* JOYCE.] Tell your aunt somebody's here to see her husband, and she'd better come in cause it's mighty important.

JOYCE

Yes, I'll tell her.
[*She goes out.*]

DORSEY

[*To* HAL.]
You know Ah've been done dirty. You know it as well as you know you're standin' there.

HAL

But why didn't you say something about it before? It's been two years.

DORSEY

Two years ago Ah was workin' and makin' good money; and besides, Ah didn't find it out till two weeks ago.

HAL

You know you couldn't do much if you went to court about it—after waiting all this time.

DORSEY

Maybe Ah couldn't; Ah know Ah couldn't. Ah wouldn't have the money to fight him in court. But Ah'm goin' to get ma money. Ah'll either get ma money or get him.

HAL

I wouldn't make threats, Dorsey. That won't do you any good, and it may do you a great deal of harm.

DORSEY

If you was in ma fix you'd make threats and carry 'em out too.

[MRS. COOPER *enters from the hall.*]

MRS. COOPER

[*To* HAL.]
Some one to see me, you said, Hal?

HAL

Some one to see the chief, but since he's not in—

DORSEY

Ah'm the man wants to see him. Dorsey's ma name and he owes me money. Five hundred dollars in round numbers, and Ah need it—need it like a man never needed money before.

MRS. COOPER

[*Coldly.*]
I don't see in what way that concerns me.

DORSEY

It will concern you if Ah don't get ma money; because Ah'll either get ma money or get him.

HAL

I told you this was no place to make threats, Dorsey.

MRS. COOPER

It seems to be a matter of business; and my husband always looks after his own business affairs.

DORSEY

When will he be in?

MRS. COOPER

[*Shortly.*]
I don't know.

HAL

[*To* DORSEY.]
I sympathize with you, Dorsey; but you shouldn't have agreed to buy the house if you thought the price was too much for you.

DORSEY

Ah wanted the house when Ah bought it, and Ah didn't know Ah was bein' robbed till ma wife took the notion that the owner didn't get as much as we paid for the place. Then she wrote to the owner and found out that we paid five hundred dollars more than the owner got from you people. Ah'd take it for ma share if Ah didn't need the money and need it bad.

HAL

I guess all of us need money.

DORSEY

But Ah need it in the worse way. Ah've got a sick wife and four hungry children. Maybe none of you all know what that means, but it means hell for a man that's got any feelin's for his family.

MRS. COOPER

I'll tell my husband you were here and he'll make an engagement to see you at his office.

DORSEY

No, Ah won't see him at his office. Ah'm goin' to see him right here if he comes home to-night.

MRS. COOPER

But he may be late.

DORSEY

Late or not late, Ah'll see him. Ah've got to see him.

MRS. COOPER

I hope you don't mean to stay here till he comes.

DORSEY

No, Ah won't stay in here in your way. Ah'm goin' home to see how ma wife is, then Ah'm comin' back here ready to park maself out there the rest of the night.

HAL

[*As he opens the door for* DORSEY.]

I hope you'll cool down a little before you come back, Dorsey. You know the kind of threats you're making don't get a man anywhere.

DORSEY

Ah'm in a mood to keep them threats, too. You know Ah've been done dirty. [*To* Mrs. Cooper.] This young feller can tell you Ah've been robbed. He's got a spark of honesty in him and he knows Ah've been cheated.

HAL

[*Holding the door open.*]
Good night, Dorsey.

DORSEY

Ah won't say good night. Ah'll be back this way before long.

[*He goes out and* Hal *closes the door behind him.*]

MRS. COOPER

[*With a sigh of relief.*]
That man makes me so nervous I don't know what to do. Even the sight of him—the way he carries his hand in his pocket—it looks as if he is about to drop a bomb or something.

HAL

I don't believe he's really harmful. He's excited, and I suppose he is in need.

MRS. COOPER

But listen, Hal; is what he says true? He says you know he's been cheated. Has he?

HAL

There's two sides to every question, you know.

MRS. COOPER

I know that, but when he made that statement you didn't deny it, you didn't say it wasn't true.

HAL

That's because he looks at it one way and the chief looks at it another.

MRS. COOPER

How do you look at it? What's your side of the question?

HAL

Well, he came to the office for us to buy a house for him and he paid what we charged.

MRS. COOPER

But he said you charged much more than the owner asked.

HAL

The chief holds that he wasn't obliged to pay it. He could've gone to some other office.

MRS. COOPER

Of course, you business people have your own peculiar way of looking at things, but was it all entirely honest?

HAL

[*Unconvincingly.*]

I suppose so.

MRS. COOPER

It seems that you ought to know. They say you know more about real estate than any man in town under forty. Was it honest in our opinion?

HAL

[*Still evasively.*]

There are many ways of looking at it, and a good number of real estate men do the same thing when they get a

chance. Whether it's honest or not depends on the way you look at it.

MRS. COOPER

Would you have done it if you had been at the head of the firm?

HAL

Now that's something I'm not sure of.

MRS. COOPER

If you're not sure about it I know you wouldn't have done it. Now I'm sure there's something wrong about it. You're simply trying to uphold John in some trick of his.

HAL

I've stated the case exactly as it is.

MRS. COOPER

Still you wouldn't have done what was done. I'm going to talk to John about it. I don't want that man coming around here with his hand in his pocket ready to shoot or cut somebody.

HAL

I tried to get the thing settled more than a week ago when Dorsey first started coming to the office, but I couldn't work it.

MRS. COOPER

John wouldn't listen to you?

HAL

No.

MRS. COOPER

I'll see if he'll listen to me. That man's coming here has surely spoiled my evening.

HAL

I wouldn't let it affect me like that.

MRS. COOPER

Don't then, go in and talk to Joyce some more.

HAL

Where is she?

MRS. COOPER

She stayed back in the library. She thought the man had business to talk about.

HAL

I'll go in then, if you don't mind.

MRS. COOPER

Yes, do. I'll wait here until John comes. [*As* HAL *starts out.*] Just a minute, Hal. [HAL *stops.*] How much did that man say he had been cheated out of?

HAL

Five hundred dollars.

MRS. COOPER

Suppose John flatly refuses to pay him. He's like that, you know.

HAL

I don't know what may happen then.

MRS. COOPER

I have a plan I mean to work if John won't pay him.

HAL

What is it?

MRS. COOPER

I'll get him to sign an open check for the grocery and laundry bills, then if he refuses to pay this man I'll make the check for five hundred dollars and pay him myself.

HAL

[*Doubtfully.*]
That may work, I don't know.

MRS. COOPER

It will work. I'll make it work.

HAL

A check for three hundred and fifty dollars just came back to him from the bank yesterday marked "no funds," and he said he'd have to be more careful.

MRS. COOPER

He told me about that. He fixed it up the same evening. So it's all right now.

HAL

I'm glad it is.

MRS. COOPER

All right, run along.

[HAL *goes out and she goes to the writing table by the door, and opening the drawer takes out a check book and looks at it. Having done this she puts it back and starts towards the window just as the door is thrown open suddenly and* ENID *rushes in.*]

MRS. COOPER

[*Frightened.*]
What in the world is the matter with you? You shouldn't

rush in here like that! You frightened me! I'm as nervous as I can be anyhow!

ENID

[*Elated.*]
I've got the best of news!

MRS. COOPER

What about?

ENID

Bill proposed!

MRS. COOPER

[*Forgetting her fright.*]
He did? And of course you accepted?

ENID

That's understood. Can you blame me for rushing in like that?

MRS. COOPER

That does make a difference. It's delightful! Where is he?

ENID

We picked Papa up on our way home and Bill is outside showing him some kind of new brake on the car.

[MRS. COOPER *goes quickly to the window and looks out.*]

MRS. COOPER

I'm glad that man's not out there.

ENID

What man?

MRS. COOPER

The man who threatened to kill your father. That's what I'm so nervous about.

ENID

[*Breathlessly.*]
Somebody threatened to kill Papa!

MRS. COOPER

Less than an hour ago.

ENID

What on earth for?

MRS. COOPER

He claims your father owes him money.

ENID

Oh, that can be easily settled. I thought it was something worth worrying about.

MRS. COOPER

But he's going around carrying some kind of weapon in his pocket. Just to look at him with his hand in his pocket all the time would give you the shivers.

ENID

Where did you see him?

MRS. COOPER

I saw him outside and in here too.

ENID

In here? What was he doing in here?

MRS. COOPER

He came in.

ENID

And were you alone?

MRS. COOPER

No, Hal and Joyce were here. They're in the library now. And by the way, Hal started to ask about proposing to you, but I cut him off and told him how everything stood. You're a lucky girl.

ENID

Lucky in what way?

MRS. COOPER

Here you are with two men wanting to propose to you in one night, while thousands of girls can't get one man to propose to them in a whole lifetime.

ENID

I don't call that so lucky. It's the way I charm them. Did Hal seem very much put out?

MRS. COOPER

No. To tell the truth, he seemed rather pleased when I mentioned Joyce in connection with him.

ENID

[*Disappointed.*]

Well, let him be pleased. I'm pleased too. I'm tickled to death.

MRS. COOPER

Did you tell your father about Bill's proposing?

ENID

No, I'll leave that for you to do. You know how much he wanted me to marry Hal.

MRS. COOPER

I'll tell him; don't you worry. As if Hal could ever make enough money to take care of you.

[*At this time* COOPER, *a prosperous-looking colored man of eight-and-forty enters from the right.*]

COOPER

Well, here I am.

MRS. COOPER

[*As if displeased.*]
It's about time you were coming home.

COOPER

What's the matter?

MRS. COOPER

Everything has tried to happen this evening.

ENID

[*To her father.*]
Is Bill coming in?

COOPER

[*Turning to the door.*]
Here he is now.

BILL

[*Entering.*]
That was quite a spin, wasn't it?

ENID

Yes, the car runs fine, Bill. Don't you think so, Papa?

COOPER

Yes; a car at that price ought to run fine.

MRS. COOPER

[*Taking* BILL's *hand.*]
And, doctor, before we go any further, let me congratulate you and Enid. I hope you'll make her a good husband and I hope she'll make you a good wife.

BILL

Then I have your consent?

MRS. COOPER

Most certainly.

BILL

[*Looking from her to* COOPER.]
And Mr. Cooper's?

COOPER

[*Puzzled.*]
This is the first I've heard of it.

ENID

[*Quickly taking* BILL's *hand.*]
Come on, let's break the news to Hal and Joyce. Mama will fix papa all right.
[*She leads him out left.*]

COOPER

[*Sternly.*]
What's this about Enid and Bill Holland? Do you mean to tell me—

MRS. COOPER

Yes, that's just it. Dr. Holland proposed to Enid and she accepted him.

COOPER

But I thought it was understood that Enid and Hal—

MRS. COOPER

Will you please tell me how on earth you think Hal could ever take care of Enid on the money he makes?

COOPER

I didn't make half what he makes when I married you, and I took care of you all right.

MRS. COOPER

That's different. Everything has changed since that time. And besides, Enid was reared in a different way from what I was. Everything was lavished on her, and after she marries she'll expect it.

COOPER

Do you think Bill can give it to her?

MRS. COOPER

More so than Hal, and that you know.

COOPER

But Hal is a fine fellow.

MRS. COOPER

I don't deny that, but what woman can eat and wear good clothes and enjoy herself on the mere fact that her husband is a fine fellow?

COOPER

[*Impatiently.*]

Yes, that's all you think of. Eating, wearing good clothes, and enjoying yourself.

MRS. COOPER

You'll have to be reasonable, John; even if that weren't all there's still a greater reason why Enid and Hal could never make it as man and wife.

COOPER

What's that?

MRS. COOPER

Hal and Joyce are in love with each other.

COOPER

[*Surprised.*]
Hal and Joyce!

MRS. COOPER

Yes.

COOPER

How do you know?

MRS. COOPER

A woman can see those things. She doesn't have to be told.

COOPER

[*Surrendering.*]
If what you say is true Joyce will certainly get a good husband.

MRS. COOPER

What about Enid? Is there anything wrong with Bill?

COOPER

I don't say there's anything wrong with him, but compared to Hal I can't see him.

MRS. COOPER

He may surprise you.

COOPER

I hope he does. Now tell me what are all the things that have happened since I've been gone.

MRS. COOPER

Before we talk about that you'd better sign me an open check for the grocery and laundry bills.

COOPER

Don't you know how much they are?

MRS. COOPER

Not yet. How should I?

COOPER

All right, I'll sign it.

[*He goes to the desk by the door and signs an open check which he gives her.*]

MRS. COOPER

[*Putting the check into the drawer.*]

I'll fill it in.

COOPER

Now what?

MRS. COOPER

Do you know a man named Dorsey?

COOPER

[*Starting.*]

Dorsey! Yes. What do you know about him?

MRS. COOPER

He's been here.

COOPER

What for?

MRS. COOPER

He says you owe him money.

COOPER

He doesn't know what he's talking about.

MRS. COOPER

[*Earnestly.*]
But he's desperate, John: I'll swear to goodness he's desperate.

COOPER

Let him be desperate. What else did he have to say?

MRS. COOPER

He said he meant to kill you if he didn't get his money. And I'm sure he's carrying a weapon of some kind. He always holds his hand in his pocket. [*Pointing to the chair.*] Even when he was sitting there he always held his hand in his pocket.

COOPER

[*Surprised.*]
He's been inside here sitting down?

MRS. COOPER

Less than an hour ago. And he says he means to come back.

COOPER

Coming back and carrying a gun, is he?

MRS. COOPER

He's carrying some kind of weapon. It may be a gun and it may be a knife. I don't know.

COOPER

[*Opening the desk drawer.*]
All right, I'll be prepared for him.

MRS. COOPER

What're you going to do?

COOPER

I want to see if this gun is in good shape.
[*Reaching into one of the lower drawers of the desk he brings out a revolver.*]

MRS. COOPER

If you owe the man why in heaven's name don't you pay him and save trouble?

COOPER

[*Unloading the revolver and snapping it.*]
I don't think I owe him anything.

MRS. COOPER

You don't think so! You ought to know whether you owe him or not.

COOPER

[*Snapping the empty revolver several times.*]
I say I don't owe him and he says I do; but I'm standing pat. If he wasn't satisfied with the price I charged he shouldn't've paid it.

MRS. COOPER

Even at that wouldn't it be better to pay him and let him go than to have bloodshed?

COOPER

[*Reloading the revolver.*]
There won't be any bloodshed.

MRS. COOPER

He says his wife's sick, his children are hungry and he's out of a job.

COOPER

Am I supposed to worry my head about that? That's his funeral.

MRS. COOPER

But, John, can't you see that he has good reasons to be desperate?

COOPER

I can't see that he has any cause to try to bulldoze me; and even if he has, I'm not afraid of him or anybody else.

[*He puts the revolver into the top drawer of the desk.*]

MRS. COOPER

[*Surprised.*]
Are you going to leave it there?

COOPER

Why not?

MRS. COOPER

He has his weapon in his pocket. He could shoot or cut you before you could get to that table.

COOPER

I'll have to come to the table before I come to the door to let him in, or before I make a check for him.

MRS. COOPER

If it were left to me I wouldn't risk being hurt on account of a little money.

COOPER

I know you don't want to see me play the coward and throw up my hands as soon as he comes in here.

MRS. COOPER

But I do want you to do the right thing, John; you know that.

COOPER

That's what I mean to do.

MRS. COOPER

This thing has me so excited I can hardly appreciate the fact that Enid is engaged to Dr. Holland. I believe a cup of tea would quiet my nerves. Won't you take one too.

COOPER

I don't mind.

[*As he and his wife start towards the hall they meet* HAL *entering.*]

HAL

[*To* COOPER.]
Did Mrs. Cooper tell you about Dorsey?

MRS. COOPER

Yes, I told him, Hal.

COOPER

[*To* HAL.]
I can't do anything for him. You know how I stand on that question.

HAL

He seems to be in a tight place.

COOPER

I can't help it. I didn't put him there.

HAL

I was going to say that if you could possibly do anything for him—

COOPER

[*Smiling.*]
You're too tender-hearted, Hal. I suppose that's why everybody likes you; but I can't do a thing for Dorsey, and I don't believe I would if I could.

HAL

I'm sorry.

MRS. COOPER

Won't you have a cup of tea with us, Hal?

HAL

No, thanks, I—
[*Just then* JOYCE *enters from the hall.*]

MRS. COOPER

[*Looking from* HAL *to* JOYCE.]
Oh, I see; a rendezvous. I wouldn't spoil it for worlds
[*She and* COOPER *go out and* HAL *and* JOYCE *come into the room.*]

HAL

[*Finishing a previous conversation.*]
I want you to rest your mind about one thing.

JOYCE

What's the one thing?

HAL

About Enid and me.

JOYCE

Oh, I know all that's settled now since she and the doctor are engaged.

HAL

You talk as if that doesn't make any difference to you.

JOYCE

Oh, yes, it does make a difference.

HAL

[*Putting his arm around her.*]
How much?

JOYCE

A great difference.

[*Just as* HAL *leans forward to kiss* JOYCE, ENID *enters followed by* BILL.]

ENID

We're looking for the young lovers.
[*Seeing them.*]
Oh, here they are.
[HAL *and* JOYCE *step apart.*]
We don't mean to intrude, but how are things progressing with you young lovers?

BILL

I can hardly keep my head, Hal. I didn't know being engaged affected a fellow like that.

[*Just then there is a loud ring of the bell. The thing is so sudden that it startles them.*]

ENID

I wonder who's trying to break the bell.

BILL

He must've kicked it or something.

[JOYCE, *who is nearest the door opens it.*]

DORSEY

[*Outside.*]

Your uncle home yet?

JOYCE

Yes, he's here. Won't you come in?

[DORSEY *enters. His hand is still in his pocket.*]

JOYCE

Take a seat and I'll call him.

[DORSEY *sits in front of the desk.* JOYCE *goes out through the hall and* ENID *follows her.*]

HAL

I see you're back, Dorsey.

DORSEY

Yes, Ah'm back. Ah told you Ah was comin' back.

HAL

I hope you've sobered up a little.

DORSEY

Ah wasn't drunk. How can Ah afford to get drunk with all the children Ah've got and a sick wife to boot?

BILL

That's the very time some men think they ought to get drunk. If you want to drown your troubles I'll fix you up.

DORSEY

No, nothin' doin' on that. Ah ain't got time to get drunk right now. Ah got bigger fish to fry.

HAL

I wasn't talking about being drunk anyhow. I wanted to know if you felt less like murdering somebody.

DORSEY

Ah wouldn't hurt a hair in no man's head; but Ah won't stand by and be kicked around. Ah'm goin' to sit tight till Ah get paid off.

BILL

I didn't know I was butting in on a business matter.

[COOPER *enters, followed by* MRS. COOPER, ENID *and* JOYCE.]

COOPER

Well, Dorsey, what can I do for you?

DORSEY

[*Rising angrily.*]

You know what you can do for me! There's only one thing Ah want out o' you and you know what that is! Pay me!

[*He holds out his hand.*]

COOPER

But I'm not convinced that I owe you anything.

DORSEY

Ah'm convinced, if you ain't!

[*Pointing to* HAL.]

And there's a young feller that's convinced too, but he won't say so because he works for you! He's the only honest man in your whole crowd and he knows you owe me money!

COOPER

You don't have to bring any one else into the argument. The whole thing is between you and me, and I say I don't owe you anything!

[*Turning to the others.*]

Will you excuse us a few minutes while we talk this over?

MRS. COOPER

Do you think I'm going to leave you here alone when that man may have a revolver or something in his pocket?

DORSEY

You said it right, lady; Ah have got a gun in ma pocket. Ah don't mean to take no chances.

COOPER

Will the rest of you go out for a few minutes?

[JOYCE, ENID, HAL *and* BILL *go reluctantly out.*]

COOPER

[*After they have gone.*]

Now, Dorsey, it seems to me that you ought to understand my position.

[*Trying to get him away from the desk.*]

Have a seat over here and we'll talk it over.

DORSEY

Ah only understand one thing, and that's that Ah want ma money! Ah'm willin' to sit right here and talk it over!

COOPER

You paid what I charged for the house. You should've thought before you bought it if you didn't like the price.

DORSEY

You can talk from now till doomsday if you want to; but Ah'm goin' to have ma money!

COOPER

You won't get it from me, not a cent!

DORSEY

[*Drawing the revolver from his pocket.*]
Then Ah'll get you! Ah'll give you two minutes to make up your mind!

MRS. COOPER

[*Starting out.*]
I'll call the police!

COOPER

[*Detaining her.*]
No, don't call the police! He's not going to shoot!

DORSEY

[*Raising the revolver.*]
You'll see that Ah'll shoot.

MRS. COOPER

[*Calling out in a frightened voice.*]
Hal! Bill!

[HAL *rushes in followed by* BILL, ENID *and* JOYCE.]

HAL

[*Starting towards* DORSEY.]
For God's sake, Dorsey; what're you doing! Put that gun down!

DORSEY

[*His face set.*]
Don't come over here, young feller. Ah like you pretty good, but if you come another step Ah'll pull the trigger!

JOYCE

[*Catching* HAL's *arm.*]
Don't, Hal! Don't!

MRS. COOPER

[*Almost screaming.*]
Why don't you pay the man, John!

COOPER

[*Bravely.*]
I won't pay what I don't owe!

ENID

But, Papa, he'll shoot you! I can see it in his eyes!

DORSEY

In another minute Ah'll shoot him if he won't come across!

COOPER

Let me come to the desk and get my check book.

DORSEY

Nothin' doin'. Ah don't want you comin' too close to me. Stay over there and Ah'll throw it to you.

[*He opens the drawer and sees the revolver which he takes out and unloads.*]

Ah reckon you wanted this gun more than you did the check book. Ah don't see no check book nohow. It's a fake and your time's up!

[DORSEY *is aiming when* MRS. COOPER *leaps in front of her husband.*]

MRS. COOPER

Wait a minute! Wait a minute! I'll pay you! I'll make a check!

[*She goes to the desk.*]

COOPER

Don't do that, Edna! You'll ruin me! I'll swear to God you will!

[*He starts for* MRS. COOPER, *who is at the desk.*]

DORSEY

[*Checking him.*]

Stand back there! You'd better let her save your cheap life if she's willing to!

HAL

Don't you know you'll hang if you shoot that man, Dorsey?

DORSEY

Ah don't care! Ah'll know he's gone in front of me!

MRS. COOPER

[*After making the check.*]

Here's the check for your money.

DORSEY

[*Taking it.*]
Is it any good?

COOPER

No, it's no good! I'll swear it's not worth the paper it's written on!

DORSEY

[*Putting it into his pocket.*]
Ah'll take a chance on that.
[*As he backs to the door.*]
This might look like a hold up to you all, but Ah did what Ah thought was right. Ah didn't take what wasn't mine.
[*To* COOPER.]
You can tell the police if you want to; but if you do Ah'll tell 'em a lot of things on you that won't do you no good. Good night and bad luck to you!
[*He goes out slamming the door behind him.*]

COOPER

[*Turning to his wife.*]
You've ruined me! Ruined me! Ruined us all!

MRS. COOPER

Ruined you how? Do you think I'd stand here and let that man shoot you down?

COOPER

That would've been better! I haven't got that money in the bank and I've been warned that they won't cash another check for me! When they turn that one down Dorsey'll set up a howl and the whole town will know what I've been doing! Creditors will be on my neck from everywhere!

ENID

Creditors!

MRS. COOPER

What do you mean?

COOPER

I mean we don't own a thing! This very house we live in doesn't belong to us! I've been living by my wits! Shamming!

MRS. COOPER

But, John!

COOPER

Yes, it's true! Every word of it!

ENID

How in the world can it be true, Papa?

COOPER

[*Turning to her.*]
How in the world do you think I ever got money enough to keep you living in your style? Fine clothes, new cars, parties, trips to Europe, and everything to try to imitate millionaires! I stole and did everything else crooked, and now I'm done for! We're all done for!
[*He goes out through the hall broken in spirit.*]

MRS. COOPER

[*Turning to* HAL.]
Hal, is this true? You know—

HAL

[*Nodding.*]
Yes, things have been going very badly with his business for months.

ENID

And you never said anything?

HAL

He ordered me not to.

MRS. COOPER

What in the world shall we do? He says even this house will go along with everything else.

JOYCE

[*Innocently.*]

Perhaps we can all go to work and pay the mortgage off the house so we can still live here.

MRS. COOPER

Go to work! Work where?

JOYCE

We ought to be able to find work.

ENID

Don't talk foolish, Joyce; think of something reasonable.

JOYCE

What's more reasonable than going to work when you have to?

ENID

Oh, a lot of things.

[*Turning to her mother.*]

After Bill and I marry I'm sure we can take you and Papa in until you can get on your feet.

MRS. COOPER

[*Relieved.*]

That is an idea! But what of Joyce?

HAL

[*Quickly.*]
Oh, Joyce will be cared for. She promised to marry me right away.

MRS. COOPER

[*Going out left.*]
I must tell John. I don't know what he may do.

JOYCE

[*Who has been staring at* HAL.]
But, Hal, you haven't ever asked me to marry you!

HAL

Won't you?

JOYCE

[*Smiling.*]
I suppose there isn't anything else for me to do now since you have everything planned out.

ENID

[*To* BILL.]
That will be all right what I told Mama, won't it, Bill?

BILL

[*Who is sitting silently by smoking and staring into space.*]
Well, to tell the truth about it, Enid, I'm not quite ready to marry and start a house of my own. I had thought I'd be able to live here with your people until my practice picked up a little.

ENID

I understood that your practice was already good.

BILL

[*Not meeting her eyes.*]
No, not anything like it.

ENID

But, Bill, the way you spend money, the new car you just bought and everything!

BILL

A fellow has to put up a front, you know. A young doctor has to look prosperous even if he's not.

ENID

So we won't be able to marry soon?

JOYCE

[*Turning to her.*]
Enid! What a question!

BILL

I'm afraid the way things are now we won't be able to marry for a long time.

ENID

The way things are! You mean about Papa?

BILL

Yes.

ENID

Oh, I see; you thought my father was a rich man.

BILL

[*Carelessly.*]
You can't blame me for that, can you? Everybody thought so.

ENID

And everybody was mistaken. I hope you will excuse me, Dr. Holland; I must look after my father.

[BILL *rises.* ENID *goes into the hall and gets his hat.*]

[*As she hands him his hat.*]

I'm glad you found out before we married that my father wasn't a rich man.

BILL

[*Taking his hat.*]

I don't see that it's necessary to take this tone about it, Enid.

[*Without replying she holds the door open for him.*]

ENID

Good night, Dr. Holland.

BILL

[*Looking towards* HAL *and* JOYCE.]

Good night.

HAL

Good night, Bill.

JOYCE

Good night.

[*He goes and* ENID *closes the door behind him.*]

HAL

[*With sympathy.*]

Everything will come out all right, Enid.

ENID

[*Almost sobbing.*]

I hope it will, Hal; but I'm sick of all this pretense and sham! Sick to death of it!

[*She goes out through the hall.*]

HAL

[*Tenderly to* JOYCE.]
Are you sick of all this sham, too, dear?

JOYCE

I've always been, but most of all I'm glad you don't belong to this house of sham.

[*As he takes her in his arms the curtain falls.*]

CURTAIN

"Oh for a muse of fire that would ascend the highest heaven of invention!"

# TWO RACES

A Pageant

by

Inez M. Burke

Adapted to the capacity of children of the seventh and eighth grades.

(One Act) (12 Minutes)

## CHARACTERS

Sam, *a Negro boy*
Gilbert, *a white boy*
Spirit of Negro Progress
Uncle Sam

Talkers: Adventure, Invention, Bravery, Oratory, Poetry, Music.

Time—Present

Place—Sidewalk of Washington, D. C.

## COSTUMES

Sam and Gilbert may dress as school boys and carry books

Spirit of Negro Progress may wear a flowing white robe, and a crown. She may wear a sash bearing her name.

Uncle Sam should wear a full-dress suit, and high-top hat, with a red, white, blue ribbon on it.

Talkers may wear white dresses with ribbon sashes bearing their names.

## TWO RACES

[SAM *and* GILBERT *are playing marbles; their books are down beside them.*]

GILBERT

[*Rising and picking up his marbles and books.*] Sam, have you ever stopped to think how my ancestors have built this country? I was reading this book [*Shows history*] last night. It tells how my people have built America, and how many great men we have had since 1492. Columbus discovered America, and there are large books talking about him and his brave adventures. Washington led this country to victory; and he, too, was the first president. Hamilton helped to establish a government and to make laws so that we might live in peace. Look, there was Lincoln, an honest man, who taught this whole country to be honest and sympathetic. Just see all in music, invention, art, and business that *my* people, *my* forefathers, have done.

SAM

Don't you think my people helped a little?

GILBERT

Well, it isn't in these books. The only thing that I saw that your people have done was to work as slaves on the plantations.

SAM

[*Apologetically.*]
Bu—bu—but—a—a—my grandmother said— W-e-ll, maybe you are right! [*Sadly.*]

[*He picks up his books, and starts off dejectedly.*]

[*Enter* SPIRIT OF NEGRO PROGRESS.]

SPIRIT OF NEGRO PROGRESS

Good evening, little boys! [*Looking at* SAM *in great surprise.*] Sam, why are you looking so depressed?

SAM

Kind lady, I haven't yet learned anything about my race. Can you tell me something my people have done? Please. [*Begging.*] Tell me something that I, too, can be proud of.

SPIRIT OF NEGRO PROGRESS

[*Smiling sweetly.*]
I am the Spirit of Negro Progress. I shall be glad to tell you about some of the things that your race has accomplished. Listen, and learn of Negro adventures.

ADVENTURE

In 1492 some Negroes came with Columbus on his great adventure. With Fray Marcos there was also the Negro explorer, Little Stephen. Henson, a Negro, went with Peary to the North Pole. He was given special credit for managing the teams, and for interpreting the language of the Eskimos. Negroes have made short cut pathways and underground roads to freedom and opportunity. These are but a few of the adventures of the Negro Race.

[*Goes to back of stage and stands.*]

SPIRIT OF NEGRO PROGRESS

Now Sam, you shall hear about the Negro inventors.

INVENTION

These are some of the Negro inventors, Sam. Benjamin Bannaker, who was born in Maryland, invented a kind of clock. He studied astronomy, and wrote an almanac. 'Twas, also, a Negro, a slave, who gave forth the idea of the cotton-gin. Matzeliger, who was born in 1852 in Dutch Guiana, invented the lasting machine. Early in youth he came to this country and served as an apprentice in the cobbler's trade in Philadelphia, and in Lynn, Massachusetts. His health beginning to fail, he invented this machine to save labor in making shoes. Granville T. Woods invented several electrical devices now used in modern machinery throughout the world. Elijah McCoy invented an appliance for lubricating such machinery as engines on steamboats and railway locomotives and thus made himself known as one of the most useful men of his time. Negroes, too, you see, have been inventors.

SPIRIT OF NEGRO PROGRESS

Now, you shall hear about some Negro soldiers.

BRAVERY

Negroes have fought creditably in every war of the country. Crispus Attucks was the first man to die fighting in the American Revolution. Negroes helped Jackson to win the battle against the British at New Orleans in 1815. Almost two hundred thousand Negroes fought bravely for their own freedom during the Civil War. Colonel Young and others did so well in the Spanish-American

War that Roosevelt, then governor of New York, made a splendid speech in praise of their heroism. In the World War the Negro showed outstanding heroism in driving back the enemies of civilization. The Negro has proved his bravery.

[SAM *gives a broad smile and glances at* GILBERT.]

SPIRIT OF NEGRO PROGRESS

Orators are next, Sam. Listen!

ORATORY

"Writers say that oratory has always been fascinating to the majority of men. This is evidently true of the Negro. Eloquence is the language of a nation that cannot be learned in school." One of the orators of color was Frederick Douglass, who was born in Maryland in 1817. He escaped from the Baltimore shipyard in 1838. He arose from slavery and became a renowned American orator speaking for the slave. Booker T. Washington, another orator, made a famous speech in Atlanta in the year 1895, that set the whole world thinking about the Negro. Mary Church Terrell, who speaks before the public to-day, is a woman orator of note; Mary McLeod Bethune is one of the most pleasing platform speakers; and Nannie Burroughs is ranked among the most eloquent of our time.

We have also a number of excellent writers like W. E. B. Du Bois, James Weldon Johnson, and Kelly Miller.

SPIRIT OF NEGRO PROGRESS

Hear, now, of Negro poets, Sam.

[*Enter* POETRY.]

POETRY

I think the names of these poets, and some of their poems will help you later in your life.

George Moses Horton.....“Poems of the Slaves”
Frances E. W. Harper.....“Vashti’s Truth”
Jas. Madison Bell.....“The Progress of Liberty”
Phyllis Wheatley.....
“An Evening Thought,” “Master,” “Servant”
Paul Laurence Dunbar.....
“With the Lark,” “Dawn,” “Life,” etc.

His poem “Life” runs like this, Sam:

A crust of bread and a corner to sleep in,
A minute of smile and an hour to weep in,
A pint of joy to a peck of trouble
And never a laugh but the moans come double
And that is life.

[Sam *smiles openly and looks at* Gilbert *who is surprised.*]

Hear, now, of the Negro’s gift of the spirit, his music.

[*Enter* Music.]

In music the Negro can point with pride to great achievement. In spite of slavery and oppression, the Negro in this country has produced the most popular music of modern times. This achievement is regarded by fair-minded thinkers as the greatest contribution of America to civilization. Like Samuel Coleridge Taylor, the greatest musician in England during the last century, American Negroes have learned the art of composing and singing their own songs of love and woe. The world has been deeply moved by the compositions of Harry T.

Burleigh, Will Marion Cook, and J. Rosamond Johnson. Thousands have been charmed by the singing of Flora Batson, Marian Anderson, and Roland Hayes. Many others with less opportunity for a hearing have left their testimony in song.

[*A selected group sings "Lord, I want to be like a little child."*]

[Sam *shows pride and delight.* Gilbert *is interested.*]

SPIRIT OF NEGRO PROGRESS

Now, Sam, don't you think that you know something to the credit of your race to be proud of?

[Sam *nods.*]

Stick to your school training, have a purpose in life, and add to the glorious achievements of the Negro Race.

GILBERT

Why, Sam, I see now that your race, too, has helped to make the United States.

UNCLE SAM

Boys, you are the future builders of America. Unite your efforts in music, adventure, invention, poetry, oratory, and bravery, and you will make America an outstanding country and really a land of the free and home of the brave.

[Uncle Sam, *the boys, and the other characters sing "America."*]

THE END

Go on and up! Our souls and eyes
Shall follow thy continuous rise:
  Our ears shall list thy story
From bards who from thy root shall spring,
And proudly tune their lyres to sing
  Of Ethiopia's glory.

*—Dunbar*

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# OUT OF THE DARK

A Pageant

by

Dorothy C. Guinn

Adapted to the capacity of students of high school.

*Complimentary copy for promotion purposes only. Order from* THE WOMANS PRESS, 600 *Lexington Avenue, New York. Price* 50*c.*

Permission for the performance of this play must be obtained from the Womans Press, 600 Lexington Avenue, New York, N. Y.

## SYNOPSIS OF THE PAGEANT

[*Note: This may be used to advantage in the program.*]

### PROLOGUE

*The* Chronicler *of the achievements of men unwinds her scroll to read the tale of the Negro, of whom, because of race hatred, little is known.*

### EPISODE I

#### The Rape of a Continent

*Before the plan was conceived of using Negroes as slaves, the African native lived as he willed in his own country. The dance of the little children is here given to convey symbolically the idea of the joyful, carefree spirit of the Africans while unmolested in their own country.*

*Years passed, and adventurers entering the land of the Sphinx began to enslave the people. The pantomime following shows the slaves being driven and dragged away. Most significant, however, is the figure of the sorrowing mother helplessly watching her children carried away. As she looks and weeps, we recognize in her bereaved figure the spirit of Africa, no longer joyful, but grief-stricken at the terrible outrage of the slave trader.*

## EPISODE II

### Slavery

*Besides the horrors experienced by those who were brought from their native land, there were the dire struggles of slavery in America. Yet out of these depths do we find men and women of note arising. Then, too, the slaves as a group made their contribution to American culture through their folk lore and their folk songs.*

## EPISODE III

### A New Day Breaks

*Although freed, the Negro must still face difficulties, which in their own way are equally as arduous as those encountered in the days of slavery. At this time we find those who rose above the stumbling-blocks placed in their way by man.*

## EPISODE IV

### What of To-day?

*The* Chronicler, *at this point, finds no record on her scroll of the present achievements of the Negro, for prejudice still exists and causes truth to be kept in the dark. The* Children of Genius—Music, Literature, Science, *and* Art—*help her complete her tale by mentioning a few of the many men and women who are accomplishing work of note to-day.*

## EPILOGUE

*This is not the end, but rather the beginning, for in spite of difficulties the Negro of genius will continue to develop more and more and to give his own rich contribution to America.*

## CHARACTERS

Chronicler
Children, *in dance*
Slave Driver
Boys (3)
Sorrowing Mother
Mother with Baby
Daughter } *for folk song dramatization*
Mother
'Lias } *for dramatization of "In de Mornin'"*
Coquette
Sam } *for "Coquette Conquered"*
Children of Genius—Music, Literature, Science, Art

## DRAMATIC INTERLUDES AND TABLEAUX

Phillis Wheatley
Benjamin Bannaker
Frederick Douglass
Sojourner Truth
Uncle Remus
The Little Boy
Booker Washington
Negro Youth
Children of Genius—
Music, Literature, Science, Art
Awakening Ethiopia

## PROLOGUE

[*Music—Overture.*]

CHRONICLER

[*Appears before stage curtain. She wears a long flowing robe and carries a scroll which she begins to unwind.*

[*Reading.*]

Mine is the rôle to tell the tale of a people who, having lived for ages of the dim past in that vast unknown land of the Sphinx, Africa, were brought against their will to another clime. How little do we know of their past culture! Here and there rumors have reached us. There was Sheba, the dusky queen who in search for knowledge visited Solomon. The ancient Egyptians, we learn, were kin to these swarthy people. In modern times, again we hear of those who attained fame in Europe, like Pushkin, the poet in Russia, and Dumas, the author in France.

But alas! My page is often blurred, for the hate of race has caused many to blot out the achievements of these people. [*Pause.*]

But I am here to bring to light out of the dark the record of the progress of these folk here in America.

## EPISODE I

### The Rape of a Continent

CHRONICLER

[*Steps to the side of stage and sits down.*]

PART I.—*The Spirit of Africa Before Slave Trade Began.*

CHRONICLER

Progress can be measured only by considering the depths from which men rise. Let us then look back to the past when these people were in their native land. How joyful was this race of men, free to grow as it wished!

[*Curtain opens. The dance of the children follows, after which they march off stage.*]

You have seen these children dancing joyfully in their carefree youth. So think of those African people long ago who in their native land lived as they willed. Their hearts were as light as the spirit of these little children who dance in joy.

PART II.—*The Spirit of Africa After Slave Trade Began.*

CHRONICLER

Then came a woeful day when men greedy for gain came to devastate the dark continent. You have heard of the wonders of the wealth and the progress of the 18th and 19th centuries. Yet while this was going on in Europe and in America, day by day, month by month, year by year, men, women, and children were being dragged to a far-off land against their will, to labor for others' prosperity. Back on the shore the aged mother, so symbolic of Africa, wept and is still weeping for the loss of her strongest children.

PANTOMIME

SOFT MUSIC—*"Go Down, Moses," by Harry Burleigh. Slaves are driven across the stage.* SLAVE DRIVER *with whip hurries youths in front of him; another*

*drags two lads away; then appears a little child with its mother, who is forced against her will to part with her loved one. At the end, she alone remains on stage, weeping, raises her hands to heaven, then turns with eyes covered, and staggers off stage. Curtain.*

CHRONICLER

Thus lived these dusky people in Africa, at first unmolested. Then they were forced to leave in sorrow their native land to find a new home and help to build amidst dire struggles a new civilization.

## EPISODE II

### Slavery

CHRONICLER

Dark were these days of long ago. Strange was the new land; stranger still were the people who enslaved hundreds and hundreds of men. You well know the horrors of slavery. But have you ever seen the gleams of light shining out of the dark? Listen, kind friends, for on my scroll are these recorded.

Once when a slave ship laden with human cargo arrived in Boston, a delicate little slave girl of seven years was brought on shore. The child was purchased by a Mrs. Wheatley and named Phillis. The kind mistress, finding the child very bright, gave her a good education. Phillis Wheatley, as she grew, developed a talent for writing poetry for which she was commended by high and low. On one occasion she wrote a poem in honor of George Washington. Listen to one of her poems.

## A. Dramatic Interludes

PHILLIS WHEATLEY

[*Curtain opens in rear of stage. She is seated writing, as in well-known picture.*]

At last it is done. Let me read part of this poem aloud to see how it sounds.

[*She holds up the paper and reads a selection from her poem, "Imagination."*]

IMAGINATION

Imagination! Who can sing thy force?
Or who describe the swiftness of thy course?
Soaring through air to find the bright abode,
The empyreal palace of the thundering God,
We on thy pinions can surpass the wind,
And leave the rolling universe behind;
From star to star the mental optics rove,
Measure the skies and range the realms above;
There in one view we grasp the mighty whole,
Or with new worlds amaze the unbounded soul.

[*Curtain drawn.*]

BENJAMIN BANNAKER

CHRONICLER

[*Continuing.*]

During colonial days there lived a Negro who was a mathematician and an astronomer, namely, Benjamin Bannaker. When he was about thirty-eight years old he made a clock which, says an article published in London in 1864, was probably the first clock every part of which was made in America. Bannaker likewise mastered the

principles of astronomy and compiled an almanac. On one occasion he wrote to Thomas Jefferson, then Secretary of State, on behalf of his people and sent him an almanac. Jefferson expressed the desire to see proofs of the talents of the Negro. After becoming acquainted with this Negro scientist Jefferson was so impressed with his worth that he appointed him on the commission to lay out Washington in the District of Columbia. As an advocate of world peace in 1793 Bannaker gave further proof of such talents.

[*Curtain opens on a darkened stage.* Benjamin Bannaker *appears in a meditative mood and soliloquizes on world peace uttering these words*]:

"Among the many defects which have been pointed out in the federal constitution by its antifederal enemies, it is much to be lamented that no person has taken notice of its total silence upon the subject of an office of the utmost importance to the welfare of the United States, that is, an office for promoting and preserving perpetual peace in our country.

"It is to be hoped that no objection will be made to the establishment of such an office, while we are engaged in a war with the Indians, for as the War Office of the United States was established in time of peace, it is equally reasonable that a Peace Office should be established in time of war.

"Let a Secretary of Peace be appointed to preside in this office, who shall be perfectly free from all the present absurd and vulgar European prejudices upon the subject of government.

"Let a power be given to this Secretary to establish and maintain free schools in every city, village and township

of the United States; and let him be made responsible for the talents, principles and morals of all his schoolmasters. Let the youth of our country be carefully instructed in reading, writing, and arithmetic, and in the doctrines of a religion of some kind."

### Frederick Douglass and Sojourner Truth

CHRONICLER

[*Continuing.*]

If you feel, O men and women, that there are great obstacles to-day, think of Frederick Douglass, born a slave in Maryland—he who suffered all the worst hardships of that institution, yet who after his escape to the North became an ardent fighter for the freedom of his people. Frederick Douglass will always be remembered as a great orator and abolitionist, courageous in the midst of dire adversity. And in mentioning courage another comes to mind—Sojourner Truth, that sturdy woman worker for suffrage—the woman who was one of the pioneers active in the early days when women were fighting for their rights. Many strange, unusual things this woman did and said during her long and remarkable career. Do you remember the story of how, when Frederick Douglass once at a meeting in Boston showed plainly that he was very much discouraged and seemed to doubt if slavery ever could be wiped out—

[*She pauses dramatically and the curtain opens.* Frederick Douglass *appears, standing as if finishing an address, turns, sits in chair behind him, looks much dejected.* Sojourner Truth *sits at a distance with arm outstretched, and looks admon-*

*ishingly at him. She rises slowly and, stretching forth a long arm, exclaims, "Frederick, is God dead?" Curtain drawn.*]

CHRONICLER

[*Repeating after a pause.*]
Is God dead? What hope there is to be gained from faith in God! Truly because of His presence were there gleams of light shining out of those dark days of slavery. [*Pauses and continues.*] Phillis Wheatley, poetess; Benjamin Bannaker, astronomer; Frederick Douglass, orator; Sojourner Truth, suffragist—these men and women, yes and many more, were born in slavery, yet not slaves, for their genius overcame all the shackles laid upon them by human hands.

### Dramatization with Singing

1. "Lullaby"—*Mother rocks baby, puts it in cradle.*
2. "Massa's Gwine to Sell Us To-morrow"—*Daughters come in; one kneels by mother, other stands. Both sing.*
3. "Keep Me from Sinking Down"—*Mother; chorus comes in, joining in singing.*

### Musical Interlude

1. "Sweet Canaan's Happy Land."
2. "The Great Camp Meeting in the Promised Land."
3. "I Couldn't Hear Nobody Pray."
4. "My Lord, What a Morning."
5. "Oh, Freedom."

## EPISODE III

### A New Day Breaks

CHRONICLER

[*Reappearing and reading.*]

A new day breaks. The enslaved are free. Still a struggle goes on. But now aid is at hand. Mission schools have sprung up. How many have been helped by these schools! Booker T. Washington was one of those ambitious boys who, though he was born a slave and even when freed had to live in poverty, tramped from his home in West Virginia to Hampton Institute. How proud are we of that boy who as a man became the great teacher of his people; he who likewise gave to the world a new ideal for education!

[*Curtain opens on tableau of* Booker Washington *lifting the veil of ignorance from* Negro Youth. *Reproduction of statue at Tuskegee. Curtain drawn.*]

CHRONICLER

[*Continuing.*]

Finally there arose among these folk a sweet singer of verse—Paul Laurence Dunbar. Little did people realize, when they used to see young Dunbar operating the elevator in a Dayton office building, that he would one day become the famous poet. All of us know Dunbar's poems in dialect. Few know, however, that he wrote poems in literary English, four novels, and several short stories.

[*Curtain opens on dramatization of*

1. "In de Mornin' "
2. "The Coquette Conquered"

*Curtain drawn.*]

### Musical Interlude

SONGS

1. "Deep River," by Harry T. Burleigh (solo).
   [*Curtain opens; chorus appears; during this,* Chronicler *retires.*]
2. "Listen to the Lambs," by R. Nathaniel Dett.

## EPISODE IV

### What of To-day?

CHRONICLER

[*Appearing, as chorus leaves stage, and reading.*] What of these people to-day, you ask? I hesitate. [*Pauses and sighs.*] It is not written yet. To my aid must I call the Children of Genius to help me complete my record. [*Calls to left.*] Come, Music, Art [*Turns to right.*] and Literature. Come, I say, to my aid. Come, Science, too; I need you.

[*Enter* Music *from left,* Art *from right,* Literature *from left.*]

MUSIC

[*Speaking for all.*]
What is thy wish, O Chronicler?

CHRONICLER

Your aid, fair maidens, to complete the tale which I am now unfolding concerning my people, bringing to light out of the dark the record of their progress.

MUSIC

I shall speak first, for in my field have these people been least hampered. Already have you heard their folk songs and music of Harry Burleigh and Nathaniel Dett. There are many other men and women who are serving me well, as, for instance, Will Marion Cook and Rosamond Johnson. Mention, too, must I make of another well-known composer, even though he was an Englishman, Samuel Coleridge Taylor.

CHRONICLER

Many thanks, my friend. Every one has heard of music. Less puzzled am I with this than with the other expressions of genius.

LITERATURE

Truly have you spoken, O Chronicler, for only my sister will the people of America see. The scales of prejudice dim their eyes to any feats of the men and women devoted to me. But there are writers of all kinds among them. Witness the genius of W. E. Burghardt Du Bois, the scholar who has written numerous books which have gripped men's minds. Have you ever heard of Charles W. Chestnutt, the novelist with a new interpretation of the life of his lowly people? Of William Stanley Braithwaite, the literary critic widely known in this country and abroad. How many poets there are, too! Not only is there Dunbar, but Georgia Johnson, Anne Spencer, James Weldon Johnson, Claude McKay. Listen to this poem by Georgia Johnson. [*Opens book and reads "The Heart of a Woman."*] And this by Claude McKay. [*Reads "If We Must Die."*] Just recently among the

youth of the race, young poets of much promise, like Langston Hughes and Countee Cullen, have appeared. Proud indeed am I of these men and women who worship at my shrine.

CHRONICLER

Most grateful am I to you, Literature, and to you [*Turns to* Music], Music, for this information. [*Pause.*] Ah, here comes Science, busy as ever with her experiments. [Science *enters right, carrying test tube into which she looks steadily as she walks slowly across stage. All turn toward* Science.] Can you pause for a minute to tell what Negro worships at your shrine?

SCIENCE

I am busy, as you well know. I am on my way to my laboratory to complete an experiment. But I shall gladly pause, O Chronicler, to assist you. Have you not heard of George Washington Carver of Tuskegee Institute, a modest little man, one of the foremost scientists of the United States? He it is who has discovered one hundred and eighteen uses for the sweet potato, one hundred and sixty for the peanut. He has also developed from Georgia clay a practical porcelain. Have you learned the story of Ernest Everett Just, the internationally known biologist, of Howard University? He was recently heralded as one of the two greatest American scientists in his chosen field, and was given a fund to prosecute in the Mediterranean waters his studies of marine biology in which he has become signally distinguished.

CHRONICLER

My scroll would indeed be incomplete with no mention of great scientists. Thank you, Science.

SCIENCE

I am always glad to help you.

[*Goes off stage on opposite side from entrance, that is, left.*]

CHRONICLER

Now, Art, last but not least, what have you to tell?

ART

Many are there who follow me. Henry O. Tanner, the painter, who has achieved great success. Have you seen his "Resurrection of Lazarus," "The Annunciation," or "The Flight into Egypt"? Taking his themes from the Bible, not only does he endeavor to use the original setting for his pictures, but he also tries to give the human touch which "makes the whole world kin," and which ever remains the same.

Alfred Alexander Smith, a young artist, has devoted much time to making portraits of famous men and women of the race, as, for instance, those of Phillis Wheatley, Harriet Tubman, Toussaint Louverture, Paul Laurence Dunbar, and Booker Washington.

Meta Warrick Fuller is a sculptress. Some of her best known works are "The Wretched," "John the Baptist," "The Silent Appeal." Here is one of her latest pieces.

[*Goes back stage, pulls curtain to one side and reveals tableau, "Ethiopia Awakening."*]

This is called "Ethiopia Awakening." See, Ethiopia is awakening and she is beginning to realize the glories of her past and the possibilities of her future. In this statue of Meta Warrick Fuller, see symbolized the soul of this people to-day. [*Curtain drawn.*] Glad am I with my sisters, the Children of Genius, to help you to

bring to light out of the dark these achievements. Ethiopia is awakening and her children are showing great promise of a bright future of culture.

CHRONICLER

I am grateful to you, fair maidens. Now is my scroll complete. Let me, before you go, entreat you to hover closely around the youth of these people. Give them your brooding sympathy. Yet ever warn them that difficulties will exist, as they always have, but constant effort will ultimately enable the truly worth while individual to surmount all obstacles. There is a latent genius in the Negro which can be developed so that he too may give his own rich gifts to America. Be his friends, good maidens.

MUSIC

[*As spokesman.*]
We will, O Chronicler.
[*Curtain drawn.*]

## Epilogue

CHRONICLER

[*Stepping in front of curtain.*]
My tale is done, kind friends (or shall I say begun?), for though my record gives no more, yet this is but a beginning. These people have done well amidst dire struggles, for genius ever finds it hard to flourish amidst the turmoil caused by hate which endangers the very life of a people. But what Phillis Wheatley, Frederick Douglass, Booker Washington and others accomplished during their lives in spite of numerous obstacles, men and women of to-day

can do. [*Here the music of "Lift Every Voice and Sing" is played softly while* CHRONICLER *concludes.*] Out of the dark into the light have I brought this record for you. May you have courage, O people, to press forward, onward and upward to the very throne of beauty and truth.

[CHRONICLER *goes to side of stage; chorus appears and sings the hymn of the race, "Lift Every Voice and Sing" words by James Weldon Johnson, music by Rosamond Johnson. Just before last verse the chorus divides, standing in semicircle. Tableau of "Ethiopia Awakening" is shown again, back stage, while chorus concludes singing.*]

CURTAIN

## DETAILS OF PRESENTATION

### Dance of the Children

I. Music—"Old Black Joe"

| | |
|---|---|
| 4 steps forward with high knee-raising beginning with right foot. | 2 meas. |
| Shuffle steps in place (arms limp). | 2 meas. |
| Repeat 3 times. | 12 meas. |
| Finish with flying turn in place. | |
| 4 long slow steps backward with one chord for each step. | |

II. Music—"Bim Bims." (Omit introduction and play in key of E♭.)

| | |
|---|---|
| 1. Circle to right with eight skipping steps. | 4 meas. |
| 2. Starting with right foot shuffle steps in place with 4 stamps (arms limp). | 4 meas. |
| Repeat to left. | 8 meas. |

III. Music—"Swanee River"

| | |
|---|---|
| Hop on left foot in place, swing right leg to side, arms extended. | |
| With hop change, extend left leg to side (hop back step). | |
| Repeat to end of phrase. All clap on last count. | |

IV. Music—Mendelssohn's "Spring Song"

1. 3 steps leaping forward.
   Both arms over head. 4 meas.
   3 steps leaping backward 4 meas.
   Repeat 8 meas.
2. Step to left on left foot.
   Draw right foot to left.
   Bring right hand down to side and across body (Spanish draw step). 1 meas.
   Repeat again to left. 1 meas.
   Repeat to right. 2 meas.

V. Music—"Swing Low, Sweet Chariot"

With right hand obliquely sideward upward, carry right arm down across body, touch right hand with left hand and continue the circle upward. 2 meas.

Repeat again allowing the left hand to remain obliquely side-upward for a whole beat on word "home." 2 meas.

Repeat all to end of phrase. 8 meas.

Stand as a tableau after last "home" is sung.

NOTE: It is perhaps well to have this song hummed by a group off stage.

## PROPERTIES

The glaring white of the footlights was softened by using in alternate sockets bulbs tinted with amber.

Very few stage properties are necessary. Those used are listed.

Chronicler—Scroll, made of large heavy paper cut about the width of typewriter paper (two pieces pasted together give long narrow sheet); two round half inch sticks, gilded, to which ends of paper are glued to form scroll; tassel.

Slave Driver—Whip.

Phillis Wheatley—(Reproduction of well-known picture.)

Chair
Round table
Book
Quill pen
Inkstand
Paper

Benjamin Bannaker

Tree stump (a small nail keg covered with green and brown crêpe paper)
Telescope

Frederick Douglass

Armchair

Dunbar Selections

"In de Mornin' "—
Basin on stand
Table set for breakfast
Two chairs

Mother (in folk song dramatization)

Rocking chair
Old-fashioned cradle
Large doll

Booker Washington

Large piece of burlap or other cloth for veil
Large flat books
Spade

Children of Genius—

Music—musical instrument
Art—palette and brush
Literature—book
Science—test tube

## Costumes

Chronicler: Long flowing Grecian costume of soft white silk. Hair bound with narrow ribbon, Grecian effect.

Children, in dance: Dresses of different colors. (We furnished cheesecloth for a simple slip. The mothers

made the dresses and decorated them with ribbons, flowers, birds, crêpe paper fringe, etc.)

African Mother: Soft gray cheesecloth robe.

Slaves: Burlap sacks slipped over the heads.

Slave Driver: Large hat, old shirt, vest, handkerchief around neck.

Phillis Wheatley: Dressed as in the well-known picture.

Benjamin Bannaker: Dressed in colonial suit, carrying large hat. See picture in Brownies' Book, June, 1920, page 173; published by Dubois and Dill.

Frederick Douglass: Stiff front shirt, ordinary suit, hair as in pictures.

Sojourner Truth: Dressed as in well-known picture.

Chorus: Costumes when singing folk songs:

Women, bandannas on heads, gingham aprons over white dresses.

Men, ordinary suits, bandannas around necks.

When singing other songs, women wear white dresses without aprons.

Booker Washington and Negro Youth: Like statue at Tuskegee.

Selections from Dunbar:

"In de Mornin' "—

Mother in house dress; boy, ordinary suit.

Children of Genius:

Music—long flowing robe. We used a large woman, to represent Music as full grown. She wore a lavender robe.

Art—artist's smock and cap.

Literature—cap and gown.

Science—a chemist's laboratory apron.

## Suggestions

1. (a) The best possible person should be chosen for the Chronicler, since everything depends upon her interpretation.
   (b) In staging the pageant, care should be taken that the Chronicler does not stand in front of the tableaux, but goes rather to the side and is seated during the time these are shown.
   (c) Bannaker carries a torch, since he has come out of doors to engage in his evening pastime of studying the heavens. Stage should be darkened as much as possible.
2. It is possible to select poems of Dunbar other than those we used. In the dramatization of "In de Mornin'," the mother recites the poem while acting; her son, in silence, acts his part. Likewise, in "The Coquette Conquered" the girl recites; her lover acts his part. Much depends upon the ability of the performers and of their coach. These two poems dramatized formed one of the best and most effective parts of the original presentation.
3. For the songs, too, choice of others is possible. "Listen to the Lambs" might be sung by a double quartet, and the chorus could come in with a third musical number to end the Musical Interlude after the Third Episode.
4. It was found better for one of the Children of Genius to act as spokesman than for all to speak together.
5. Literature might select other poems than those mentioned.
6. The time consumed for producing the pageant as originally written was one hour and fifteen minutes.

The pageant revised, being a little longer, should take about one hour and a half.

7. In compiling the program, a symbolic cover design might well be used. The printed synopsis helps the audience follow the pageant.
8. For any information about dance and music write to Mrs. Eleanor Fenton, 101 Waterman Street, Bridgeport, Conn., or Miss Katherine Knox, 143 Girard Avenue, Hartford, Conn.
9. Mrs. Meta Warrick Fuller has very kindly given us the catalogue description of her statue as follows: "'Ethiopia Awakens' from a deathlike slumber and, as she unwinds the mummy bands, dawns into a realization of the glories of her past and the possibilities of her future." This description should be helpful in staging the tableau.

"Faith builds in the dungeon and lazarhouse its sublimest shrines; and up through roofs of stone, that shut out the eye of heaven ascends the ladder where the angels glide."

# THE LIGHT OF THE WOMEN

*A ceremonial for the use of Negro groups*

by

FRANCES GUNNER

Adapted to the capacity of junior high and high school girls.

Permission for the performance of this play must be obtained from the Womans Press, 600 Lexington Avenue, New York, N. Y.

## CHARACTERS

THE SPIRIT OF SERVICE—*Flowing garments, of light and color.*

BEAUTY—*Flowing robe shimmering with gold.*

TRUTH—*In white, with a thin veil over her face.*

ETHIOPIA—*Royal robes, with just a touch of the barbaric.*

THE SLAVE MOTHER
SOJOURNER TRUTH
HARRIET TUBMAN
AMANDA SMITH
FRANCES COPPIN
PHILLIS WHEATLEY
KATY FERGUSON
FRANCES HARPER

*Costumes to be copied from pictures of these characters.*

THE MOTHER
THE TEACHER
THE MINISTER
THE DOCTOR and the NURSE
THE STUDENT, in cap and gown
WAR WORKERS, in uniform

*The Women of To-day*

THE GIRL, in Girl Reserve uniform.

PAGES and ATTENDANTS.

Place—The Temple of Service.
Time—The present.

## THE LIGHT OF THE WOMEN

*A girl's choir, in conventional choir robes, enters through the audience, singing Johnson's Hymn of the Race, "Lift every voice and sing."*

*The curtain rises, revealing the* SPIRIT OF SERVICE *on a low throne. Her torch, not yet lighted, rests beside her.* BEAUTY *and* TRUTH *sit on either side. The choir mounts to the stage, still singing, and seat themselves in a semicircle behind the* SPIRIT OF SERVICE. *Two* TRUMPETERS *and a* HERALD *enter.*

HERALD

O Spirit of Service, Ethiopia comes.

SPIRIT OF SERVICE

Ethiopia! Of all earth's queens there's none I welcome more. Well is she known to you, O Beauty, and to you also, Truth. This dusky queen, to whom has been so great a portion of earth's care and sorrow, answers always to my call. Often her eyes are wet with tears, and her ears heavy with the sorrows of dark mothers and the oppressions of her people, yet faith and courage never leave her, and of all earth's queens there is none braver.

[ETHIOPIA *enters attended by two small girls. The* SPIRITS *rise to greet her.*]

ETHIOPIA

Again, I come, O Spirits.

SERVICE

Welcome, Ethiopia!

TRUTH

Again, welcome, O Queen!

BEAUTY

Thrice welcome, Daughter.

SERVICE

What news, O Queen?

ETHIOPIA

I bring good news, news of light among the women. Light amid darkness; light amid care and sorrow; light amid prejudice and ignorance; light amid oppression and cruelty; light down the shadows of the years; the light of the souls of good women; light from the Light of the World!

TRUTH

This is good news indeed, O Queen. The dreams and deeds of thy women are well known to me. Yet I never weary of the tale. Tell me again of these women and of their great strivings.

ETHIOPIA

[*Turning and looking to the right, as if at a distance.*]

Through the mists of the years I seem to see approaching the women of yesterday. Out of the shadows of the past they come. First a heroic figure, the Slave Mother.

[*The stage darkens, and slowly and silently to soft music the* SLAVE MOTHER *enters and stands near the center of the stage. Her head is bowed with*

*the sorrows she has borne, but she is not broken by them.*]

In the dark days of bondage she trod the humble paths of service and gave herself in unstinted fidelity to the families of the nation. She it was who mothered all the children of the Southland, sharing their childish joys and sorrows and standing by them through life with a loyalty the years could not diminish. Often she was separated from her own loved ones by the slaver's cruel hand, yet she kept the light of faith and hope burning within her soul. From her untutored ranks sprang the more heroic figures of the past who, gaining knowledge and even liberty, established themselves as teachers of the race and played important parts in the struggle for freedom. Back of them stood the mothers of the race, praying for the dawn of better days for their children. "They also serve who only stand and wait."

[*The* Slave Mother *passes with uplifted face and hands clasped in prayer as the girls sing "Nobody knows the trouble I've seen." When the* Slave Mother *has passed out,* Sojourner Truth *enters slowly, carrying a Bible, while the choir sings the last strains of the same song. There should be a brief interval between the exit of the* Slave Mother *and the entrance of* Sojourner Truth.]

Sojourner Truth, picturesque prophet, woman of God! After gaining her own freedom this great woman gave herself to the cause of race liberty. Not only for freedom of men's bodies did she labor, but she preached the gospel of Christ, that men might know through Him true freedom of soul. Book learning was never hers; but she possessed a natural eloquence, keen wit, and knowledge from God that enabled her to electrify audiences with her

power. A breadth of vision was hers, that grasped the significance of the Woman's Movement which was then at its feeble beginnings, and the so-called Woman's Right Conventions welcomed her untutored eloquence for their cause. For over a hundred years she dwelt on this earth, preaching the truths of Christianity and giving her measure of service to the great causes of the day.

[SOJOURNER TRUTH *passes to the soft singing of "The Gospel Train is Coming." When she has passed out,* HARRIET TUBMAN *enters to the last strains of the song.*]

Another brave figure of the past, Harriet Tubman! After escaping from bondage, with only the north star as her guide, she returned to the danger zone to help other fugitives. Making nineteen different trips into the South, she guided in all over three hundred slaves into freedom. She was soon known as "Moses," and many believed that she led a charmed life, for never were any of her protégées recaptured. During the Civil War the peculiar abilities of this woman were recognized and used by the Federal Government. She became nurse, guide, and spy, flitting between the lines of the armies, saluted and revered by Union soldiers.

[HARRIET TUBMAN *passes, to the singing of "O Freedom, Freedom over me."* AMANDA SMITH *enters with the last strains of the song, after* HARRIET TUBMAN *has gone out.*]

Amanda Smith, who through slavery, poverty and adversity pushed her way upward to the front ranks of those who serve. For years she was one of the most spiritual and eloquent exhorters of the times, and traveled extensively as an evangelist in America, England, Scotland, Africa, and India, where she preached the gos-

pel with great power and triumphant success. In later years she devoted all her energies to the care of homeless children, establishing an orphan home near Chicago. There she put to practice her ideas concerning religious education. She found paths of true service and was not disobedient to the heavenly vision.

[AMANDA SMITH *passes as the girls sing.*]

TRUTH

These are indeed great women, O Ethiopia.

ETHIOPIA

And many more could I summon from the past—Phillis Wheatley, first race poet; Frances Coppin, brilliant educator; Katie Ferguson, who before the Revolution helped establish the first modern Sunday School in New York; Frances Harper, teacher, speaker, abolitionist, temperance worker and poet. And there are many others who suffered but toiled successfully within the veil.

[*As* ETHIOPIA *speaks, each character mentioned in the last speech moves across stage. She pauses after each name, while throughout her speaking and the passing of each character the choir hums very softly an appropriate tune.*

SERVICE

These are women of yesterday. What of to-day?

ETHIOPIA

The women of to-day, O Great Spirits, are yours as well as mine. Mothers, teachers, doctors, nurses, ministers, social workers—all have seen the light of truth, beauty and service. During the dread days of war they too

sacrificed for the common cause. While their sons, husbands and brothers gave their lives in France, they helped to keep the home fires burning. In every kind of patriotic duty they gave their service. They knitted and sewed for the Red Cross, gave their hard earned dollars to Liberty Loan and War Work drives, and labored in camps and local communities. The women of to-day gave the fullest measure of service to their race and country.

[*Enter the women of to-day: The* MOTHER; *the* TEACHER, *carrying books*; *the* NURSE *in uniform; the* STUDENT *in cap and gown; the* WORKERS *in uniform; the* DOCTOR, *etc. Music and singing of "Father of Lights." As they come in they pass to the left of the stage but remain on it. The stage grows bright, and the* GIRL *enters, dressed as a Girl Reserve and carrying a G.R. pennant. She salutes and gazes about her.*]

THE GIRL

While afar in the fields at play I saw a great light, and following it, came here. What wonderful place is this? I feel so happy here! And there are many whom I know.

[*She advances to the Women of To-day and gives them the Girl Reserve salute. Then* ETHIOPIA *leads her toward the* SPIRIT OF SERVICE.]

ETHIOPIA

O Daughter of To-day, this is the Spirit of Service, and you have been well led to her temple. With her are Beauty and Truth. [*The* GIRL *bows to each in turn.*] Yonder down the years [*She points in the direction in which the Women of the Past have gone*] are the Women

of Yesterday. Against the horizon are their prayers, visions and strivings, rising as precious incense unto God. About you here are the consecrated, constructive lives of the Women of To-day. Yours is a goodly heritage. This is the heritage of the Girls of To-day who will be the Women of To-morrow.

THE GIRL

O Ethiopia, how wonderful this all is, and how glad I am that I followed the light! I speak for the Girls of To-day. We shall not be unworthy of our goodly heritage but shall strive to carry on the work which has been begun. We shall seek "to find and give the best." We shall endeavor to do all we can for our race, our country, and our God.

[*Singing—"I'm going to do all I can for my Lord." A soft amber light is thrown on the stage, covering all the characters.*]

THE GIRL

Oh, more light! How beautiful are the lights, and how happy I am! Whence comes this light, O Spirit of Service?

SPIRIT OF SERVICE

This is the Light of the Women. This is the light in the souls of good women, of women brave and true. This light comes from the Light of the World.

THE GIRL

May I too have this light?

SPIRIT OF SERVICE

[*Taking from the throne her torch, which instantly burns with a bright light at her touch.*]

Yes, take it back with you. It is for all the girls of the world—light in the soul—light given by the Father of Lights.

[*Singing—"Father of Lights."*]

[*The curtain falls after the entire hymn has been sung.*]

## Producing Suggestions

In its present form the ceremonial lasts about twenty minutes. It may be lengthened by the addition of other historic characters and by developing pageant features —e.g. processionals and symbolic action. Children may be used to accompany the Slave Mother. The Modern Mother may carry a baby.

If the time for preparation is limited, Ethiopia's lines may be divided between two or three of her attendants, since the part is a long one to be learned quickly.

"In ancient Ethiopia, in Sheba, and in Egypt, I prayed an audience, but in vain. Opposition always stood without the door and denied admission."

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# ETHIOPIA AT THE BAR OF JUSTICE

by

Edward J. McCoo

Permission for the performance of this play must be obtained from the author, Edward J. McCoo, 210 W. Seventh St., Newport, Ky., from whom single copies may be bought for 25 cents each.

## ETHIOPIA AT THE BAR OF JUSTICE

Time—Now.
Place—Anywhere, everywhere.

### Scene

*Throne room of* Justice. *Throne on elevated platform with canopy over it, steps leading up to throne. Seat for* Mercy *to left, on floor level; seat for* Ethiopia *to right; seat for* Opposition *to the right down towards the front of the stage. Scales of Justice fixed at right of throne.*

*Decorate about throne and stage with potted ferns, palms, foliage and national colors.*

### CHARACTERS

The Page—*Young man or boy.*
Justice—*Man, commanding appearance.*
Leniency—*Girl, 6 to 10 years.*
Oppression—*Girl or boy, 6 to 10 years.*
Mercy—*Woman, gentle in appearance.*
Opposition—*Woman, quick in action and in speech.*
Ethiopia—*Young woman, regal bearing, not too fair of complexion; one who can sing well and act.*
History—One with clear voice, who can read with expression.
First Slave from Africa—*One with full, deep voice.*
Haiti—*Young woman, proud and graceful.*
Liberia—*Young woman.*

CRISPUS ATTUCKS—*Tall, military young man.*
SLAVE OF '61—*Old man part, one who can sing.*
CIVIL WAR VETERAN—*G. A. R. type.*
SPANISH WAR VETERAN—*Lively soldier.*
WORLD WAR VETERAN—*World War type.*
LABOR—*Man, strong, large.*
BUSINESS—*Merchant or banker type.*
PROFESSIONS—*Physician or lawyer type.*
WOMANHOOD—*Matronly.*
NEGRO CHURCH—*One with priestly bearing.*

DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE.
THIRTEENTH AMENDMENT.
FOURTEENTH AMENDMENT.
FIFTEENTH AMENDMENT.
} *Young women.*

ANTI-LYNCH LAW—*Man, rough and tumble type.*
PUBLIC OPINION—*Quick and lively.*
PROPHECY—*Woman with power; one who can sing.*
LOVE—*Graceful, lovely in appearance.*

## COSTUMES

THE PAGE—Costume of page at European courts or Boy Scout.
JUSTICE—Robe of purple; silk or velvet preferred; flowing sleeves, loose girdle, gilt scepter in hand.
LENIENCY.—Dresses in white (ancient Greek style).
OPPRESSION—If girl, patterned after the dress of a princess in fairy books. If boy, Boy Scout uniform.
MERCY—Greek style; soft, clinging material.
OPPOSITION—Richly gowned; evening dress.
ETHIOPIA—Beautifully gowned; modern dress.
HISTORY—Robed in white with flowing sleeves.

First Slave from Africa—Dark brown shirt, short pants, crocus sack fastened around as a skirt. Chain about the waist and to each hand and foot.

Haiti—Dressed as summer girl, carrying open parasol.

Liberia—Original dress made of red, white and blue.

Crispus Attucks—Revolutionary period style.

Slave of 1861—Bent and bowed, ragged and torn; leaning on staff; white hair and beard.

Civil War Veteran—G. A. R. uniform.

Spanish War Veterans—Spanish-American War uniforms.

World War Veterans—World War uniforms.

Negro Church—Prelate's cap and gown; black.

Declaration of Independence—Draped in American flags or costumes of red, white and blue.

Thirteenth, Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments—Draped in American flags or costumes of red, white and blue.

Anti-Lynch Law—Dressed as a person just from a rough and tumble fight.

Public Opinion—Dress, hat and shoes made of newspapers.

Prophecy—Suitable dress. Ancient prophetic style.

Love—Greek style, white.

Labor, Business, Professions, Womanhood—Use modern dresses that will portray the character presented.

The pageant is best given with music accompaniment in the places designated. Wherever the title of a piece of music is given commence to play it there and continue to the point where in the judgment of the director it is best for the music to cease. *Play "The Flower Song" whenever* Mercy *speaks.*

## THE PLAY

[*For opening piece play some patriotic march; continue until* JUSTICE *enters.*]

[*Enter* PAGE. *Takes position. Enter* JUSTICE.]

JUSTICE

I am Justice; I render to every man that which he deserves; I withhold nothing from any man; I am no respecter of persons. I place each man in my scales and balance him against his deeds. All men must appear before my bar; they may evade me for a season, but at last I overtake them. Justice must prevail. [*Ascends the throne.*] Here come Leniency and Oppression, they continually wait upon me.

[*Enter* LENIENCY, *Left*; OPPRESSION, *Right.*]

[*They run up steps to throne, stand on either side of* JUSTICE. *One and then the other whispers in the ear of* JUSTICE.]

JUSTICE

One whispers in my ear and says, "Be lenient"; the other whispers and says, "Oppress." I heed them not.

[*Exit* LENIENCY *and* OPPRESSION. *After they run down from the throne* LENIENCY *kneels imploringly.* OPPRESSION *shakes fist and head and frowns. Exit R. and L.*]

JUSTICE

Every tongue, tribe and nation must pass before my bar. I judge them all; my decrees are just, yet gentle Mercy often tempers my decrees with love. [*"Flower Song."*] Come, thou, Mercy, from thine abode.

[*Enter* MERCY, *Left.*]

JUSTICE

And answer why thy continual pleadings against my judgments; what is the quality that doth so fill thy heart as to make thee plead for sympathy?

MERCY

[*"Flower Song."*]

"The quality of mercy is not strained; it droppeth as the gentle rain from Heaven upon the place beneath: it is twice blest; it blesseth him that gives, and him that takes: It is an attribute to God himself. And earthly power doth show itself likest God's when Mercy seasons Justice."

[*Second part of "Flower Song" or agitated music; a harsh minor.*]

[*Enter* OPPOSITION, *Left, hurriedly.*]

JUSTICE

[*Standing and speaking sternly.*]

What intruder is this? Why this unceremonious entrance into this presence?

OPPOSITION

I am Opposition. I enter unannounced because I know that I am not welcome. I am unwelcome in every place, but I get there just the same. I force myself into every

organization, into every community, every place. No matter what you start you must reckon with me. Somewhere down the line you will meet with Opposition.

I appear before your bar to-day demanding that judgment be passed upon Ethiopia. She is doing too much; she is becoming too ambitious; she is flying too high; you must clip her wings.

MERCY

[*"Flower Song."*]

Justice, I know Ethiopia. She is true. Mercy pleads for her. Opposition aims to prove her false because she resents her slanderous tongue.

OPPOSITION

Pay no attention to Mercy's whinings. Let me tell you, Justice, you had better put the bridle on Ethiopia. If you don't she will kick out of the traces. I tell you she has gone without the bounds we set for her! She is building schools; she is building churches; she is buying farms; she is organizing wealth; she is operating banks; she is making *great demands upon a civilization which she did not produce!*

MERCY

[*"Flower Song."*]

All that Ethiopia asks, or has asked, is Justice. She does not even ask that Mercy *plead,* but that Justice *act.* She only asks to be unmolested in the lawful pursuit of happiness; the right to live; the right to breathe the air so freely given from nature's store; the right and opportunity to develop those powers with which God has endowed her. But why is not Ethiopia called?

By what right do you accuse her before the Bar of Justice and she not present in her defense?

OPPOSITION

By the right of might! How dare you think of giving Ethiopia a fair deal? Let sentence be passed; be it just or be it unjust—if it is against Ethiopia. Opposition will see that it is executed.

JUSTICE

Opposition, you forget that this is the Bar of Justice and not the Court of Public Opinion! Let Ethiopia be called; let evidence be presented! Let her be placed in my balance and weighed against her deeds.

[*Justice shall prevail.*]

PAGE

Ethiopia! Appear before the Bar of Justice!

[*Those off-stage sing one stanza of Johnson's Hymn of the Race, "Lift Every Voice and Sing."*]

[*Enter* ETHIOPIA, *Left.*]

ETHIOPIA

Justice, I have long sought you, but have never found you. In ancient Ethiopia, in Sheba and in Egypt, I prayed an audience with you, but in vain. Opposition always stood without your door and denied admission to your presence. A few years since, when I returned from war, Democracy came to my assistance, but Opposition soon drove him away. Yet Fairplay and Mercy bade me hope and trust. Now my long quest is ended; my petition is simple; it is that Justice act in my behalf.

JUSTICE

Ethiopia, men say that I am stern. I am not stern, but just. I work according to an inexorable law, and that law is to render to every man that which he deserves, be it good or be it ill. Opposition charges that you are drawing heavily upon the Bank of Civilization and that you have nothing on deposit there.

ETHIOPIA

[*Animated.*]

Why such an accusation? Let History be called; let her recount my deeds. I am willing to rest my case upon her records, even though those records have been unjustly censored by Opposition.

JUSTICE

Let History be called!

PAGE

History! Appear before the Bar of Justice!

[*"Battle Hymn of the Republic."*]

[*Enter* HISTORY, *Left.*]

[*Carries a large volume.*]

JUSTICE

History, recount to us the part which Ethiopia played in the affairs of men.

[ETHIOPIA *sits.*]

HISTORY

[*Reading out of book.*]

Ethiopia's record is long and varied. We find first traces of her in the lower part of what is now called Egypt.

OPPOSITION

Stop, History! Go back further than that. Turn to the First Book of Moses, read where Noah cursed the son of Ham.

MERCY

That is one of the greatest fallacies used by Opposition to crush and throttle Ethiopia! Yes, *Noah* cursed the son of Ham, but *God* did not. And what was the condition of Noah at the time? Awakening out of a drunken stupor.

JUSTICE

Read on, History.

HISTORY

I find here a record of Opposition appearing against Ethiopia when the Israelites were camping in the wilderness. In the Fourth Book of Moses we read, "And Miriam and Aaron spake against Moses because of the Ethiopian woman he had married."

MERCY

Yet by that marriage Moses learned to conserve his strength; by that marriage he learned to govern Israel.

JUSTICE

Proceed!

HISTORY

941 years B.C. Ethiopia was a mighty nation and in high state of civilization; its king, Zerah, brought an army of a million men and three hundred chariots of war to fight against the King of Judah.

OPPOSITION

And Judah whipped him, too.

MERCY

True. But at a later date Ethiopia saved Judah from defeat.

JUSTICE

Let History continue.

HISTORY

When Solomon was at the height of his glory other rulers heard of his fame and wisdom, but only the Queen of Sheba, an Ethiopian, came to be taught of him.

OPPOSITION

Stop! I deny that she was an Ethiopian!

HISTORY

For centuries many denied it; denied it despite all evidence contrary to their denial. But recent excavations have forever set at naught all ideas that she was not an Ethiopian. The tomb of this Queen of Sheba has been unearthed, and with it a record telling of her and her visit to King Solomon.

OPPOSITION

Oh, if she was an Ethiopian, and if she did go—curiosity carried her, that's all—that's all—curiosity—and curiosity killed the cat.

JUSTICE

Proceed!

HISTORY

Ethiopia reigned upon the throne of Egypt for many years; to Ethiopia is Egypt indebted for much of her early civilization; in Egypt Ethiopia built many monuments, which still exist. Tirhakah, one of the most famous conquerors of ancient times, was an Ethiopian. Homer sings the praises of Ethiopia, calls her blameless, and the favorite of the gods.

OPPOSITION

History, you are prejudiced! Didn't Ezekiel call her a careless Ethiopian, and didn't Jeremiah disdainfully say that Ethiopia cannot change her skin?

MERCY

Yes, but who rescued Jeremiah from the dungeon of mire in which he was thrown?

ETHIOPIA

[*Rises.*]
I, Ethiopia, did.

HISTORY

When Jesus of Nazareth was on his way to Calvary all others turned their hearts against Him. [*"Must Jesus Bear the Cross Alone."*] Reviled by Jew, mocked by Roman, scorned by both, the only spark of sympathy shown Him was by Ethiopia. When struggling up the hill, bleeding, weary, worn and faint, Jesus sank beneath the heavy cross, on which was laid the sins of all the world—Ethiopia picked up the cross and bore it for Him.

OPPOSITION

Justice, I see no necessity for all this harangue!

JUSTICE

I am interested. Opposition, you have withheld all this from me. Proceed, History.

HISTORY

Abyssinia, an Ethiopian kingdom, whose ruler is descended from King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba, has maintained an independent Christian civilization throughout many centuries, while powers and principalities round about her have passed way.

OPPOSITION

Enough! History, I had no idea that you had recorded all of this in favor of Ethiopia.

ETHIOPIA

True, Opposition, I know that you have effaced from History many facts which would plead my cause. History, I thank you. You need not further recount my deeds; Opposition will not believe. [*Exit* HISTORY, *R.*] I have other friends without [*to* JUSTICE]. I pray thee have them enter.

[*Gives* JUSTICE *a scroll on which their names are written, then sits.*]

JUSTICE

Let them enter.

[*Gives scroll to* PAGE.]

PAGE

First Slave brought from Africa! Appear before the Bar of Justice!

[*"Nobody Knows the Trouble I see."*]

[*Enter* First Slave, *Left.*]

FIRST SLAVE

I am the First Slave brought from Africa to this land, where sorrow and despair have been my portion. Opposition lured me here and has continually dogged my steps. In my primitive home, my morals were pure. Opposition corrupted them. All that Opposition could purloin she robbed me of, but my faith in God she could not dethrone; I overcame at last.

OPPOSITION

[*Following him and shaking fist at him.*]

What right have you to complain? I took you out of the jungle and brier-patch and led you to civilization.

MERCY

Then why deny him the rights of civilization? The cry for civilization is that *Justice might prevail.*

[First Slave *exit R.* *"Yankee Doodle."*]

[*Enter* Crispus Attucks, *Left. Marches about stage.*]

CRISPUS ATTUCKS

Who says that Ethiopia has done nothing for civilization? I am Crispus Attucks, an Ethiopian. My blood was the first to flow for American freedom. When, on Boston Commons, the first blow was struck to break the chains

of English tyranny, I fell as a martyr to the cause of civilization in the western world. The children of men who die for their country should be given the opportunity to live for their country. My plea, then, is that JUSTICE *now prevail.*

[*Exit L.*]

[*Off stage, Left, is sung verse of "Old Black Joe"; as chorus is sung enter* SLAVE OF 1861, *Left, singing leaning on cane. Play verse softly through speech.*]

SLAVE OF 1861

Justice, I am glad to appear before your bar in defense of Ethiopia. I am one of Ethiopia's sons. For 250 years we toiled, but Opposition paid us no wages for our hire. We felled his forests, we tilled his fields, we protected his home, we nursed his children. We built his factories, we made brick for him, but he provided us no straw. He said that he was a Christian, but he denied us Christianity. He said there was a God, but he denied us access to that God. Nevertheless, we sought that God; we sought Him in the woods and in the valley; in the cane-brakes and in the cotton patches; in the big house and in the cabin we sought Him; we found Him. We talked to Him; He heard our cry! [*Sings, "Go Down, Moses, Go Down."*] He called His Moses Abraham Lincoln. I heard Him say, "Go down, Lincoln, go down, away down in Dixie Land, and tell Opposition to let my people go." Opposition turned us loose, gave us nothing of what we had earned, but left us to shift as best we could. But God was with us; we were successful; and now, by His grace [*sing "I am Coming, I am Coming"*].

[*Exit R. While those off-stage sing with him all of the chorus. Music as of Fife and Drum Corps, "John Brown's Body Lies a Mouldering in the Clay."*]

[*Enter* Civil War Veteran, *Left.*]

CIVIL WAR VETERAN

We Are Coming, Father Abraham! Two Hundred Thousand Strong.

[*Marches about to music.*]

I represented Ethiopia in the Civil War. I am a Union Soldier. I fought for Old Glory. Who says that Ethiopia has done nothing for civilization? When civilization was about to fail in America, Ethiopia saved it. When State after State was seceding; when the stars were falling in quick succession from our flag, I and my black comrades stepped beneath them, caught them upon the points of our bayonets and pinned them back to Old Glory! Yes, the spirit of John Brown moved in Ethiopia, and Ethiopia saved the day.

[*Exit. Off-stage chorus is sung.*]

[*Enter* Spanish-American War Veteran, *Left.*]

[*Music, "There'll Be a Hot Time in the Old Town To-night."*]

[*When in his speech he mentions the different airs, let them be played, if possible, blending one into the other.*]

SPANISH WAR VETERAN

[*As he enters.*]

Remember the Maine? When Uncle Sam called for volunteers to fight against the encroachment of Spain, representatives of all hyphenated Americans responded.

Ethiopia likewise volunteered. Bands were stationed at the ports from which the soldiers embarked for Cuba, and as the soldiers sailed away the music of the bands would fill the air. For each regiment they played the music of the nation from which those soldiers descended. For the Germans they played "The Watch on the Rhine," for the French they played "La Marsellaise," for the Italians they played "Italia," and for the English "God Save the King"; for the Northern regiment they played "The Star Spangled Banner" and "Yankee Doodle," for the Southern ones they played "Dixie Land." But what do you suppose they played for the Negro regiments—"I Don't Like a Nigger No How," and "I Don't Care If You Never Come Back." But! But!! But!!! When we reached San Juan Hill, when regiment after regiment failed in its attempt to plant the Stars and Stripes upon the block-house at the top of the hill, when gallant Colonel Roosevelt and his indomitable Rough Riders were about to be annihilated, we charged up the hill, singing "There'll Be a Hot Time in the Old Town To-night," and when the smoke of battle had cleared away Old Glory could be seen floating in the breeze above the block-house. Ethiopia had won the day.

[*Music, "Over There."* *Exit L.*]

[*Enter* WORLD WAR VETERAN, *Left. Marches.*]

WORLD WAR VETERAN

I represented Ethiopia in the great World War. When the Huns were at the gates of Paris, when civilization was about to give way under their terrific onslaughts, France and England called Ethiopia from their African colonies, Uncle Sam called Ethiopia from America. Ethiopia went, several million strong, snatched the barbarian from

the throat of civilization and hurled him back beyond the Rhine.

[*Marches "Over There." Exit R.*]

[*Enter* LABOR, *Left.*]

[*Music, March "Old Man River" from Show Boat.*]

LABOR

I am Labor, the son of Ethiopia. The world stands upon my back. I built the hanging gardens in Babylon; the pyramids in Egypt. The American colonies were a failure till I came to their rescue. Even the soil of Dixie refused to yield its crop of fleecy cotton till it heard my voice, singing in plaintive melody, as I buried the seed within its bosom. I have followed the hoe and plow with laughter and with song; I have performed those tasks which all others shirk, yet without which America would not be great. Without me the wheels of industry would not turn, commerce would cease, chaos would reign supreme. I have worked willingly, worked long, with no reward other than a slave's cabin and a life of bondage for myself and children. I am willing to continue to carry the world upon my shoulders, but I want justice.

JUSTICE MUST PREVAIL.

[*Exit R.*]

[*Enter* BUSINESS, *Left.*]

BUSINESS

Justice, I come from the marts of trade. I am a citizen of the business world. In many ways I find Ethiopia contributing to the financial prosperity of civilization. I find her dealing in stocks and bonds; I find her offsprings pooling their wealth and establishing banks,

through which are financed the many enterprises fostered by Ethiopia. I find her in the insurance world developing a field which was long controlled by Opposition.

OPPOSITION

Every financial structure which Ethiopia erects she destroys.

ETHIOPIA

That is not true!

OPPOSITION

If she establishes a bank she misappropriates the funds and it collapses. Witness the failure of the Freedman's Bank.

MERCY

That was at a time when Ethiopia was young and without experience to guide her. The Freedman's Bank was managed by white men who stole the hard-earned savings of its Negro depositors. Now Ethiopia has banks whose strength is as that of the Rock of Gibraltar. Witness the many banks whose stability is assured and whose integrity is undoubted.

OPPOSITION

If upon the argument of Ethiopian pride and racial consciousness, she builds a great company that does her credit, she betrays her people, and sells to her enemies for filthy lucre.

BUSINESS

Opposition forgets that *companies* may be sold, but the "*good will*" of Ethiopia, that intangible thing by which these companies prosper, is not for sale. Ethiopia is

awake! Undaunted by failures resulting from opposition, Ethiopia supports those institutions which are her own.

[*Exit R.*]

[*Enter* PROFESSIONS.]

PROFESSIONS

I represent Ethiopia in the professions, in science and inventions. I bear record that Ethiopia has made her contribution to the world of science. In medicine and surgery she has made contributions without which materia medica would not have attained the present state of achievement. In every science and invention Ethiopia has blazed her path. In the early dawn of civilization, when man was in his infancy, Ethiopia commenced the smelting of iron, which made possible the progress of modern times. Turn to the music world. In this "the land of the free and the home of the brave," the only original contribution to music in America is that which Ethiopia made. Opposition stills her voice, leans upon her harp, and listens with bated breath, while Ethiopia sings.

[*Exit R.*]

[*Enter* WOMANHOOD, *Left.*]

WOMANHOOD

I represent Womanhood as evidenced by Ethiopia. A womanhood which has met discouragements; a womanhood to which was shown no glittering rays of hope; a womanhood which has walked in darkness and yet has emerged, bringing with her a light that shines far and wide; a womanhood which has succeeded under greater difficulties than any other womanhood has endured. Other

women have been enslaved by Opposition, but they were allowed religious liberty and given the right to improve their minds, but the Ethiopian woman of antebellum days, with the door of hope shut in her face, with a veil drawn between her and God, with the school house bolted and barred against her; debauched in body, soul and mind, has notwithstanding, brought forth a people who by their rapid strides have excited the wonder of the Twentieth Century. Should Ethiopian womanhood cease to shed its ennobling influence upon the social life and be what Opposition would have it be, the whole fabric of civilization would crumble and fall.

[*Exit R. Music, "Holy, Holy, Holy."*]

[*All off-stage sing chorus, piano continues the strain of the verse nearly through speech of the Church.*]

JUSTICE

Who is this I see coming in all her glory?

[*Enter Negro* CHURCH.]

[*Followed by Robed Choir.*]

THE CHURCH

I am the Negro Church. I build, own and operate churches and schools for Ethiopia. I send my gospel messengers into every State of the Union. I send them to Canada, to South America, to the Isles of the Sea, to faraway Africa, south and west. The sun never sets on my domains. I am always vigilant to enhance civilization and to establish the kingdom of God in the hearts of men. I taught Ethiopia to stand as God has made her —upright. I hold out hope. When the way seems dark, when the path is rough, I bid Ethiopia look above and

ask, "Is God dead?" [*"How Firm a Foundation."*] Then God, with His lightning, breaks through the clouds and reveals His brightness; then His voice rolls with the majesty of thunder along the firmament of her soul as she hears Him say, "Fear not, Ethiopia, for I am with thee. Though briars and thorns be with thee, yet I am with thee. I am thy God, and will still give thee aid."

[*Exit Right, as all sing, "How Firm a Foundation."*]

OPPOSITION

[*To* ETHIOPIA.]

These things which you mention are mainly abstract. I want to see and hear something concrete. You can neither mention any civilizations which you have built nor any nations which you have established.

ETHIOPIA

I pray you have my witness appear.

[*Singing of the "The Haitian National Anthem."*]

[*Enter* HAITI, *Left.*]

HAITI

I am Haiti, the Pride of the Antilles, the Garden Spot of the Western World. The two Black Republics, Haiti and San Domingo, have endured though Opposition has raged against them. I gave to the world a Louverture and a Dessalines. In my land Ethiopia reigns, and *Justice must and shall prevail!*

OPPOSITION

[*Following her.*]

Tommy rot! If all your boasts be true, why was it necessary for America to send marines and take control?

[*Exit* HAITI, *R., haughtily.*]

MERCY

It was not necessary. Opposition dethroned Justice and drove him out.

[*Music, "All Hail Liberia."*]

[*Enter* LIBERIA, *Left.*]

LIBERIA

I am Liberia, a child of the American slave trade. When Opposition was raging against Ethiopia, Justice carried some of Ethiopia's children to my land and established a government of, for, and by Ethiopia. In my land Ethiopia is building schools and industries and is sending civilization to the neglected sections of Darkest Africa.

[*Exit R.*]

OPPOSITION

If you are doing so much, why can't you finance your own affairs? You asked Uncle Sam to lend you five million dollars and he refused.

MERCY

You, Opposition, engineered that request as a scheme to crush the life out of Liberia, but Justice overpowered you and did prevail.

JUSTICE

Opposition, what say you now?

OPPOSITION

Ethiopia has no legal right here.

ETHIOPIA

I pray you have my legal friends appear before you.

JUSTICE

Let them enter.

PAGE

Declaration of Independence! Thirteenth Amendment! Fourteenth Amendment and Fifteenth Amendment! Appear before the Bar of Justice!

[*"Columbia the Gem of the Ocean."*]

[*Enter* DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE, THIRTEENTH, FOURTEENTH *and* FIFTEENTH AMENDMENTS, *Left.*]

[*March and form in two oblique lines on each side of stage.*]

DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

"We hold these truths to be self-evident that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." Adopted in General Congress July 4, 1776.

JUSTICE

Opposition, in this you say that Ethiopia is your equal, and is entitled to the same blessings which you enjoy.

THIRTEENTH AMENDMENT

"Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States or any place subject to their jurisdiction." Adopted December 18, 1865.

JUSTICE

In this you say that Ethiopia should not be enslaved, that peonage should not exist.

FOURTEENTH AMENDMENT

"All persons born or naturalized in the United States and subject to the jurisdiction thereof are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside." Adopted July 28, 1868.

JUSTICE

In this you say that Ethiopia is a citizen and should have a voice in civil affairs.

FIFTEENTH AMENDMENT

"The rights of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States, or by any State on account of race, color or previous condition of servitude." Adopted March 30, 1870.

JUSTICE

By this you say that Ethiopia shall not be denied the rights of franchise. Then, Opposition, in the name of all the gods, at once, by what right did you disfranchise Ethiopia?

[*Loud noise and knocking outside, L. Music, "America."*]

[*Enter* ANTI-LYNCH LAW, *Left.*]

[*Comes running in; falling on floor before throne.*]

JUSTICE

Who are you?

ANTI-LYNCH LAW

I am for Ethiopia! I am the Anti-Lynch Law. I had a hard fight to pass through the legislative bodies; they

tried to discredit me in the courts. I came here to ask if Justice has lost its sway? *Justice should prevail!*

[*"Columbia the Gem of the Ocean."*]

THIRTEENTH, FOURTEENTH *and* FIFTEENTH AMENDMENT *march to music and Exit L.* ANTI-LYNCH LAW *and* DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE *exit R.* JUSTICE *stretches forth his scepter as if about to render a decision.*]

OPPOSITION

Hold, Justice! Do not stretch forth your hands as yet. I have a friend, who should be heard. Let Public Opinion be called.

PAGE

Public Opinion! Appear before the Bar of Justice!

[*Waltz time music.*]

[*Enter* PUBLIC OPINION, *Left.*]

PUBLIC OPINION

I am Public Opinion; I am formed by the daily newspaper. I endeavor to be honest, but very often the mold in which I am formed is not true, it is too one-sided.

OPPOSITION

Now speak the truth! Public Opinion, speak the truth!

PUBLIC OPINION

That I will. I once thought as did the enemies of Ethiopia, that she was not worth a place in the depths of Hades; but now, despite the one-sided press in which I am made; despite the fight which Opposition makes

against Ethiopia, I am changed. I denounce Opposition; I am willing that *Justice shall now prevail.*

[*Exit R. Waltz music.*]

JUSTICE

[*Descending from the throne.*]

Come hither, Ethiopia. Your case is well put. Justice oft is tardy, but finally it must prevail. Ascend the throne of Justice and be thou just to all mankind. Mercy will ever plead for you; Opposition will gradually fade away and Public Opinion be drawn closer unto you.

[ETHIOPIA *ascends the throne.*]

[*Enter* PROPHECY, *Left.*]

PROPHECY

"And Ethiopia shall stretch forth her hands and princes shall come out of Egypt."

[*Sings "The Chief Corner Stone," acting the part while she sings. Be very dramatic. Do not use chorus after the second verse. In the third verse, second line, substitute "Opposition" for "Tribulations."* OPPOSITION, MERCY *and* JUSTICE *can form tableaux by the interest they show in what* PROPHECY *is doing and singing. All can hum the refrain after each line. "The Chief Corner Stone," words and music by Hermes Zimmerman, is published by Hermes Zimmerman, 215 W. Twenty-third Ave., Gary, Ind.*]

[*Exit* PROPHECY, *Left.*]

[*Wedding March continues.*]

JUSTICE

Ethiopia, Justice has a proposal to make to you. Since we two have long sought each other, but for many years in vain; since now we meet to find that we have "two souls with but a single thought"—Justice. Since we have "two hearts that beat as one" with Love, I now propose that we be wed.

ETHIOPIA

[*Stands.*]

Justice, you descended from your throne to Ethiopia. I now relinquish that throne to Love. Ethiopia loves Justice.

[*Descends from throne as she sings or speaks.*]

"If a star would wed a flower
It must fall from its nest on high;
The flower to reach the star
Must droop on its stalk and die.
'Tis the same when Ethiopia loves,
For by that love she lives;
And like the star and flower
Would die for the love she gives."

[ETHIOPIA *and* JUSTICE *clasp hands, standing in front of the steps of the throne.*]

[*Wedding March.*]

[*Enter* LOVE, *Left, followed by* LENIENCY *and* OPPRESSION, *carrying baskets of flowers.*]

LOVE

Make way for Love! Let love ascend the throne and rule in the hearts of men. [*Ascends.*] Mercy, ascend, keep ever by my side. Ethiopia and Justice approach.

Love pronounces the word that makes Ethiopia and Justice no longer twain, but one.

[*Joins their hands;* LENIENCY *and* OPPRESSION *during this time have marched to the wedding march and taken positions in front of* ETHIOPIA *and* JUSTICE.]

LOVE

Ethiopia, since Mercy, Love and Justice are now thine own, see that thou dost these extend to all mankind. Opposition, fade away. [OPPOSITION *stamps foot, Exit.*] Public Opinion, draw near and be kind [PUBLIC OPINION *enters*] and do thou all the rest, assemble and dwell together in unity beneath the Stars and Stripes forever.

[*Arrange for a large American Flag to be unfurled at this point. All enter and sing "The Star Spangled Banner."*]

THE END

NOTE.—The song, "The Chief Corner Stone" is absolutely necessary to the play. Substitutes may be used for any other music mentioned.

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